

Spring 5-2012

The Effect of the Parent Liaison on Latino Student High School Completion and Parent Involvement

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The University of Southern Mississippi

THE EFFECT OF THE PARENT LIAISON ON LATINO STUDENT HIGH SCHOOL
COMPLETION AND PARENT INVOLVEMENT

by

Jeanne Thompson Walker

Abstract of a Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School
of The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

May 2012

ABSTRACT

THE EFFECT OF THE PARENT LIAISON ON LATINO STUDENT HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION AND PARENT INVOLVEMENT

By Jeanne Thompson Walker

May 2012

The graduation rate for Latinos in the United States has consistently lagged behind the high school completion rate of White and Asian students in the United States. Efforts to bring equity to schools and improve high school success among Latinos have been inconsistent even after the implementation of No Child Left Behind Legislation. The use of a Spanish speaking parent liaison is gaining momentum as an intervention strategy in elementary schools, often funded by Title 1 grants to schools with large populations of socio-economically disadvantaged students. The Parent Liaison position is also being utilized in some high schools to encourage parental involvement, improve the academic performance, and the graduation rate among Latino high school students.

This research study was designed to provide quantitative and qualitative data to document the impact of the Parent Liaison on parental involvement and Latino high school graduation. The graduation rate of Latino students in schools with a Liaison was analyzed and compared to the graduation rate of Latino students prior to the implementation of the liaison in the high school. The effect of the Parent Liaison on parental involvement was measured by a parent survey. Responses of parents with students in schools with a liaison were compared to responses of parents in schools without a liaison. In addition, three parent liaisons were interviewed to determine their perceived impact on student's graduation rate and parental involvement.

Data analysis revealed that schools with a Latino parent liaison demonstrated generally positive trends in high school graduation rate levels. Parents in schools with and schools without liaisons communicated that they did or would use the liaison as a resource to communicate with the school and teachers regarding school progress and academic achievement. The majority of the parents identified as Latino indicated that they communicated most often in Spanish. Interviews of the Latino liaisons revealed common themes of importance in their interactions with parents and students: accessibility of liaison, mentoring Latino students, college admissions and financial information, identifying social, economic, and academic resources, teamwork with other school personnel, and communication with all stakeholders.

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May 2012

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family who consistently encouraged me during the long months of graduate school and dissertation research. I am very thankful for the love and support of my husband, Doug, and my children, Jessica and Davis. Without their patience and understanding I could never have achieved my doctoral degree. To the extended family of Walkers, Mojicas, Reneaus, and Thompsons, I will be forever grateful for your ongoing encouragement to push through to the end. Thanks also to my colleagues, Antwane and Susan, who cheered me on as we labored through classes and group projects. Finally, I thank my grandmother, Jimmie Mae, and my mother, Jane, for the grit and “Heard” determination that has led me to achieve every goal I have ever set.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my appreciation to the University staff who guided me through the dissertation process, including, Dr. Rose McNeese, Dr. J.T. Johnson, and Dr. Tammy Greer. Special thanks to my work colleagues who offered advice, support, and editorial assistance including Dr. Greg Ewing, Filo Hernandez, Diana Huntzinger, and Dr. Catherine Mallanda. I also appreciate the translation services of Maria Prieto. Most importantly thank you to the Parent Liaisons whose tireless efforts have shaped the lives of many children and inspired my research. Qué Dios les bendiga.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Study

This dissertation is a report of the impact of the parent liaison position on Latino student high school completion and parent involvement. The study compares the high school graduation rate of Latino students before and after the employment of a Latino parent liaison in the school. Parents' perception of the impact on their involvement in the school is also studied. The first chapter of the dissertation presents the background of the problem, theoretical foundations, the purpose of the study, the research questions, a brief overview of the methodology, and the significance of the study. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the research assumptions, limitations, and related definitions.

Background of the Problem

Since 2000, immigration in the United States has surpassed the 1910-1919 peak decade of immigration (Rong & Preissle, 2009). Latinos are the fastest growing ethnicity in the United States, growing at three times the rate of other populations in the last decade (U.S. Census, 2006). As of the 2006 Census report, Hispanics comprised 14.6% of the total U.S. population. The southern state in which the study is located is ranked second in the nation in terms of Latino population growth, and currently has the twelfth highest enrollment of Latino students in K-12 schools (U.S. Census, 2006).

Approximately one third of children entering kindergarten in the United States come from Hispanic homes (Rong & Preissle, 2009). The United States Census estimates the Hispanic population in 2010 to equal 23.1% of the total population (America's Children in Brief: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2010). Georgia

ranks eighth in the United States in the population of illegal immigrants, estimated to number approximately 425,000 to 500,000 in 2008 (Passel & Cohn, 2009). According to the PEW Hispanic Center, the number of children of illegal immigrants increased by 1.2 million in five years between 2003 and 2008 (Passel & Cohn, 2009). Garcia (2001) projects that more than 20% of the school age population will be Hispanic by the year 2020.

As of 2000, four-fifths of United States school-aged immigrant children are associated with a minority population. Three-fifths of Hispanic children are immigrants or children of immigrants. Focusing on first, second, and third generation Latino students will be important for educators (Rong & Preissle, 2009). “The Hispanic population has been the fastest growing group, accounting for more than half of the number of school-age immigrant children and almost two-thirds of the number of immigrant minority children” (Rong & Preissle, 2009, p. 22). Schools have traditionally been the most important institution in absorbing newcomers into U.S. society (Rong & Preissle, 2009). In response to the rapidly growing immigrant student population, education policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders must respond strategically based on accurate information about the characteristics of the students’ immigration experiences and their acculturation into United States society (Rong & Preissle, 2009).

For most students in the United States, high school graduation rates have steadily improved over the past three decades (Fashola & Slavin, 2001). In contrast, as of 1996, the drop out rate for Hispanic students who were born outside the United States was 44% (Garcia, 2001). The United States Department of Education reported the dropout rate for all Hispanic students, immigrant and non-immigrant, to be 18.3% as of 2008 (NCES,

2010). First generation Hispanic immigrants demonstrate a 15.7% dropout rate, 18.1% males and 12.9% for females (Rong & Preissle, 2009). According to the Census Bureau, 24% of Latino youth age 18 to 24 are enrolled in post-secondary institutes, as compared to 34% of all youth age 18 to 24 (PEW, 2009). Forty nine percent of the Latinos age 16 to 24 were not enrolled in either high school or college. Sixty six percent of immigrant Latinos age 16 to 24 were not enrolled in school. In comparison, 41.6% of all young people age 16 to 24, and 40.4% of White Americans were not enrolled in school (PEW, 2009).

The school district in this study is located in a suburban metropolitan county in the southeast and is ranked 96 out of 3,141 counties in the nation in terms of Latino student enrollment (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). In this school district, the graduation rate of Latino students, 72.2%, falls well below the average for all students in the district, 82.2% (Georgia DOE, 2009). To improve the success of Latino students in the school district, parent liaisons have been employed at eight high schools with a high ratio of Latino enrollment. The parent liaison position is funded through the reauthorization of Elementary and Secondary Education ACT (ESEA), Title III funds for immigrant and English Language Learner (ELL) education (Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 1965). The liaison is charged with educating and involving Latino parents in the educational process, as well as monitoring and supporting Latino students in the schools.

Latino achievement is significantly impacted by the qualifications of teachers and the environment of the school. The influence of teachers on immigrant teenagers is pivotal in student navigation of the United States school system. Rong and Preissle (2009) admonish that today's educators must "consider immigrant children's

characteristics, their families, and their neighborhoods in relation to their educational attainment, but also account for power, representation, and school control, as well as the social, racial, and gender stratification of the U.S. society” (p. 116).

Both Hispanic parents and students believe that the cultural differences between students and teachers are a major reason for the achievement gap between Latinos and their peers (Garcia, 2001). According to Major (2006) one important key to school adjustment and academic achievement among language minority children in secondary schools is cultural mediation by teachers. Cultural mediation is the “process of planned intervention in which teachers and administrators act as cultural brokers between the mainstream culture of the United States as it exists in our schools and the minority home cultures of immigrant children” (Major, 2006, p.29).

The concept of school, family, community partnerships is the cornerstone for the development of family centers and the implementation of the parent liaison program at the high school level. Mapp, Johnson, Stickland, and Meza (2008) propose that effective family center models include three components: “1) a supportive infrastructure, 2) the existence of skilled center staff; and 3) the presence of responsive programming” (p. 338). Successful parent centers result in four key outcomes: the development of relational trust among adults; positive changes in parental efficacy; the creation of student relational trust; and an increase in student efficacy (Mapp, et al., 2008).

A clear focus on student learning is a critical component of effective centers. School administration and staff create this focus by working through the center to engage parents in supporting student achievement. To facilitate the work, school district leaders must appropriately fund and support the center and the staff through the provision of

resources and training. A pivotal role is played by the parent liaison who acts as the “glue” of the center, cementing the connections between students, staff, and family (Mapp, et al., 2008, p. 350). One of the most important functions of the liaison is to act as the cultural broker for the student and family, providing links for parents to support their student’s achievement (Cobb County School District, 2010). Mapp et al. (2008) identified the six key roles of the liaison that enable them to serve as a cultural broker: authentic connectors, border crossers, bridge builders, nurturers and caregivers, creative communicators, and advocates/mediators. Family centers must be responsive to the needs of the school community, especially the students and parents of the school. Variations in center functions are dependent on the needs of the population served. In some communities, parental lack of social capital creates the need for multiple connections to outside support resources such health organizations, employment services, legal support, and educational centers.

Perhaps one of the most intangible but important functions of parent resource centers at the high school is their role as a safe haven for high school students and their parents. The size and complexity of modern high schools can create a very intimidating environment for newcomers and struggling students. The availability of an adult who can speak their language and offer advice for mitigating the complexities of high school has a significant impact on the immigrant student’s sense of self-efficacy (Fashola & Slavin, 2001).

Mapp et al. (2008) specified five characteristics that transform family centers into “zones of community”: stakeholder mutual respect, comfort of home, welcoming environment for all, recognition for individual ideas and needs, and open communication

among stakeholders (p. 339). When all these characteristics are in place, parent/family centers can transform the school environment and culture. This research study is designed to demonstrate the difference that the parent liaison role plays in positively affecting Latino dropout rates and school success.

Theoretical Foundation

Underperformance of ethnic and racial subgroups in the American school system led politicians to establish No Child Left Behind (NCLB) mandates through the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA, 1965). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 states as its purpose “to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education” (NCLB, 2001). The legislation makes specific reference to closing the achievement gap between low and high performing minority and nonminority students. Schools are now held accountable for the performance of Latino students as a subgroup of their population.

An important component of NCLB initiatives is parental involvement. Section 1111 of the legislation specifically addresses the need for schools to “provide the coordination, technical assistance, and other support necessary to assist participating schools in planning and implementing effective parent involvement activities to improve student academic achievement and school performance” (NCLB, 2001). Much research supports the importance of parent involvement in fostering student achievement (Constantino, 2006; Epstein, 2010; Epstein, et al., 2002; Jeynes, 2003; Mapp, et al., 2008). Constantino (2006) proposes schools that recognize the importance of parental involvement and engage families in the school community make great strides in achieving learning for all.

Researchers in academic achievement often point to Coleman's theory of social capital as one of the most important factors in academic performance. As important as a family's financial resources, social capital enables parents and students to navigate the complex social and educational systems in our culture. Social capital is composed of expectations, information sources, and norms (Coleman, 1988). Individuals with high levels of social capital demonstrate the ability to function effectively within the society of the middle to upper classes. Researchers contend that the possession of social capital enables individuals to minimize the limitations of minority and socioeconomic status (Portes, Fernandez-Kelly, & Haller, 2008; Robinson, 2008).

Several researchers theorize that cultural capital plays a significant role in facilitating educational achievement (Bourdieu, 1996; Laureau & Weininger, 2003). Increased cultural capital enables minority populations to assimilate to the dominant, middle and upper classes in society. Driessen (2001) counters that schools reward only the cultural capital of the dominant class. Latino students and parents typically operate with much lower levels of social and cultural capital, severely impeding academic endeavors.

Social identity, acculturation, and assimilation also dramatically impact achievement among minority populations (Montero-Sieburth & Batt, 2003; Ogbu, 1992; Portes-Fernandez-Kelly, 2008; Rong and Preissle, 2009). Schools which implement programs to facilitate pluralism or selective acculturation can help minority students to compensate for the familial lack of social or cultural capital (Portes, Fernandez-Kelly, & Haller, 2008). Flor Ada & Smith (2002) contend that schools must create policies and programs that "counteract pervasive societal forces that disenfranchise people by

qualifying knowledge as private property belonging to some and not to others” (p. 48). Constantino (2006) proposes that schools must help students to reshape or rethink their school experiences in their own educational process. Engaging the student and their parents in the educational community can positively reshape attitudes, behaviors, and motivation level.

Problem Statement

Latino students comprise the largest minority group in many school systems in the United States (PEW, 2009). The academic achievement of Latino students continues to lag behind the achievement of Caucasian students at the high school level (Slavin & Calderón, 2001). The consequences of poor academic performance at the high school level have long term significance. Latino high school students have a higher dropout rate and lower enrollment in post-secondary institutions (PEW, 2009). Factors influencing Latino underachievement include lack of academic preparation, lack of parental involvement, parents’ education level and understanding of the education system, student engagement in the educational environment, and knowledge of the steps for college enrollment (Constantino, 2006; Epstein, 2002; Garcia, 2001; Major, 2006; Rong & Preissle, 2009; Slavin & Calderón, 2001).

Without the benefit of a higher education, Latino children of immigrants will not have access to the jobs that can move them to upper middle class status. It is likely that Latinos will continue to stagnate in lower paying jobs that limit their access to many privileges of life in the United States (Portes, Fernandez-Kelly & Haller, 2008). In addition, research indicates that Latino youth without a high school diploma are more likely to participate in risky behaviors (PEW, 2009). As the immigrant population in

United States schools continues to grow, it is critical that educators identify effective strategies for improving achievement level of Latino and other minority students.

The current political climate in many areas of the country has created a powerful surge against Latino illegal immigrants (Dizikes, 2010, para. 1). This political tension threatens to undermine any efforts to improve Latino achievement and high school graduation rate. It is critical that educators and the general public recognize that continued academic gains are dependent on proactive steps to minimize the barriers to education posed by poverty, minority status, as well as cultural and language differences.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this research study was to determine the quantitative impact of a parent liaison at the high school level on Latino student high school completion. The quantitative analysis consisted of a comparison of graduation rates in schools before and after implementation of a parent liaison program and surveys of parents to determine the influence of the liaison on Latino parent involvement. Interviews of several parent facilitators provided qualitative data regarding their involvement and perceived impact on students. The surveys were designed to assess the interactions of the liaison with Latino students. Much research has been completed from a qualitative perspective to measure the importance of parent liaisons at the elementary and middle school level. Several studies have evaluated the impact of parent liaisons funded by Title I resources yet very few studies exist describing the effect of the parent liaison on critical student performance factors, such as graduation rate.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. Does access to a parent liaison increase the graduation rate of Latino students in suburban schools?
2. Does access to a parent liaison increase the parental involvement of Latino parents in suburban schools?

Hypotheses

H₁: Access to a parent liaison in a high school setting does not impact the graduation rate of Latino students in suburban high schools.

H₂: Access to a parent liaison does not increase the parental involvement of Latino parents in suburban high schools.

Significance of the Study

No Child Left Behind legislation has forced school systems across the United States to closely scrutinize the academic performance of minority subgroups (NCLB, 2002). The rapid growth of the Latino population over the last decade in many areas of the country has led some districts to implement programs to promote rapid assimilation of Latinos into the culture of the America education system. Although the achievement of Latino students has been highly discussed in scholarly journals, little statistically evidence exists to guide practitioners in their efforts to improve the performance of Hispanic youth.

Title III of NCLB, Subpart 4, the Emergency Immigrant Education Program, provides funding to assist school systems that have experienced rapid growth in student enrollment due to immigration (ESEA, 2002). The school system that was the focus of this study used Title III money to fund a parent liaison position in several high schools with a large concentration of Latino students. While sufficient research exists to support

the role of the parent liaison in Title I programs, particularly at the elementary level, there is minimal investigation of the parent liaison's role in supporting Latino achievement at the high school level in non-Title I schools. Research to support the program at the high school level is largely limited to qualitative feedback.

Tighter immigration policies as well as limited opportunities for post-secondary enrollment underscore the importance of high school success for Latino students (Rong & Preissle, 2009). Anti-immigration sentiment threatens to undermine any attempts to improve the status of Latino students in the United States (Lucas, 2002; Rong & Preissle, 2009; Slavin & Calderón, 2001). The parent liaison program, like many others in the face of the economic downturn, faces competition for funding and closer scrutiny of effectiveness during the current budget crisis faced by our education system. Statistical evidence of effectiveness of the program could provide educational leaders with a rationale for continuing and expanding the Latino parent liaison position.

Methodology

A mixed method was used in this research study to add depth and provide specific information about the responsibilities of the liaison. The quantitative segment of the research design was causal-comparative. This segment focused on investigating the effect of the parent liaison on the graduation rate of Latino students, *ex post facto* and measuring the impact of the liaison on parent involvement. The qualitative segment studies the perceptions of parent liaisons regarding the impact of the program on high school graduation and parent involvement.

Sample Participants

The subjects of the research were the Latino population in seven metropolitan high schools in the southeast area of the country, a sample size of approximately 400 Latino seniors. All students qualifying as a graduating senior in the 2011-2012 academic year were included in the school samples. The research examined the graduation rate for a five-year period to determine the strength, if any, of the correlation between access to the parent liaison and graduation rate during the same time period. The relationship between parental involvement and access level to parent liaisons was measured through the parent surveys.

The qualitative portion of the study consisted of interviews of the parent liaisons in three schools. Only liaisons with over one year's experience were included in the study to increase the validity of responses. At the time of the study, one school had a newly hired Title I parent liaison and another school was in the process of interviewing and hiring a liaison.

Anastasia (2001) purports that by questioning parents about their feelings and communications with school, educators can come closer to understanding the match between parental expectations and their perception of the quality of the education received by their children. The central question examined in this study was: What is the effect of the parent liaison on Latino parent involvement? Ancillary questions related to the central question included: Did the parent liaison provide parents with academic support to facilitate graduation? Did the parent's relationship with the parent liaison serve as a catalyst for perseverance in high school course work and continuance to graduation? Did the parents' interaction with the parent liaison help the parent facilitate

their child's academic achievement in their classes and successful completion of high school?

Assumptions

The purpose of the study was to measure the impact of the Latino parent liaison on Latino student graduation rate and parent engagement. The research assumed that each parent liaison participating in the study fulfilled their job responsibilities to the best of their ability. The study presupposed that the parent liaison was not biased regarding any student's or parent's appearance, immigration status, or other unknown factors. It was also assumed that all students were provided basic information regarding graduation requirements and grading procedures. The qualitative portion of the study assumed that liaison interview responses were open and honest.

Limitations and Delimitations

The results of this study are limited to the effect of a Latino parent liaison on the Latino population in high school. The results cannot be generalized to non-Latino or elementary or middle school students. Because of the wide variations in ability levels, socio-economic status and demographics within the school district studied, the results may be difficult to duplicate. Variations in the transiency in student and staff populations are beyond the control of the study. Likewise variations in the experience and professional effectiveness of the liaison are factors that cannot be controlled. The research cannot control other factors that may impact students' grades and graduation rate including illness, lifestyle choices, and immigration status.

The dramatic impact of the economic crisis in the United States on school systems during the length of the study may have significantly limited the ability of the parent

liaison to intercede effectively on behalf of the Latino students and their parents.

Likewise, the impact of negative press and political actions against Latino immigrants may have affected Latino student achievement, but cannot be measured or controlled by this study. Anti-immigration laws passed in the state during the research period resulted in a decline in Latino enrollment in the school district and limited the survey sample size.

Definitions

Acculturation – the process by which one group of people adopts the cultural beliefs, traits, values, rules, and behaviors of another group.

Assimilation – the process by which an individual adapts to a new culture, and the cultural traits and beliefs merge together. In contrast to acculturation, assimilation implies a move away from the native culture into the host culture (Gans, 1999).

Cultural Capital – an individual competence gained as a result of cultural interactions and inheritances.

Grade Point Average (GPA) – a cumulative average of a student's course grades, calculated by assigning a 0 to 4 point value to the grade received in each course. The sum of the points is divided by the number of courses to equal the cumulative grade point average.

Graduation rate - The graduation rate for the state of Georgia is calculated by dividing the number of students who graduate with a regular diploma in four years by the number of 9th-12th grade dropouts from appropriate years plus graduates plus other completers (The Governor's Office of Student Achievement, 2008).

Hispanic – An ethnic label created by the U.S. census, refers to Spanish speaking persons who reside within the U.S. and trace their heritage to Spanish speaking countries

including Spain, Mexico, Central America, South American and the Caribbean Islands (Wilkinson, 2008).

Latino – People who trace their roots to Mexico, Central America, South America and the Spanish speaking Caribbean islands.

Parent Liaison – For the purposes of this study, a parent liaison is a Spanish speaking adult who works with Latino parents and students to assist in assimilation into the American education system.

Pluralism – The theory that minority cultures can maintain cultural identity while assimilating traits of the dominant culture.

Social Capital - The expectations, information sources, and social norms an individual possesses as a result of family background and upbringing.

Summary and Organization of the Study

The first chapter of the research study presents important background information relevant to the research question and the theoretical framework which will drive the inquiry. Also presented in Chapter I are the statement of the problem, the research questions, and a brief overview of the methodology. Finally, the limitations, delimitations, and pertinent definitions in the research study are included. Chapter II will discuss the theories of social capital, cultural capital, cultural assimilation, social identity and Maslow's theory of needs, as they relate to the study. In Chapter III, the details of the research methodology will be presented. Chapters IV and V will describe the finding and summarize implications for future research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Education is often perceived as the vehicle for empowering individuals to overcome the limitations of poverty and social inequalities (Flor Ada & Smith, 2002; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Slavin & Calderon, 2001). Inequities within the world are frequently blamed for minority students' lack of success (Lee & Bowen, 2006). The rapid increase in Latino student populations throughout the United States warrants closer scrutiny of factors limiting their achievements in education. As school systems face increased accountability for minority student performance, it is critical that educators understand the barriers that impede Latino students' graduation from high school and enrollment in post-secondary institutions (Garcia, 2001).

Factors of Student Achievement

Student academic success is determined by multiple factors including ability, self-esteem, self-efficacy, social support, and strong relationships (Emslie, Contreras & Padilla, 2002; Garcia, 2001; M. L. Gonzalez, 2002; Ho, 2009; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Mapp, et al., 2008; Ogbu, 1992; Rong & Preissle, 2009). Any attempt to improve student achievement must address at least some of these factors and minimize the potential negative effects on student motivation, resiliency, and performance. According to Ogbu (1992), the learning and school performance of minority children "are influenced by complex social, economic, historical, and cultural factors" (p. 7). Rong and Preissle (2009) contend that schools must establish policies to address racial equity and inequality in order to help newcomers overcome the structural barriers in our schools and society.

Garcia (2001) states that multiple personal, environmental, and academic issues influence students at risk, including poverty, limited English proficiency, race/ethnicity, and geographical location.

Personal factors

Personal qualities that affect student achievement include poverty level, parental education, food, nutrition, and health care. According to Garcia (2001), Hispanic and Black children are more likely than White children to live in poverty. The poverty level of Latino youth grew from “33% in 1985 to 40% in 1996” (Garcia, 2001, p. 316). The 2000 census (U.S. Census Bureau) indicates that Hispanic immigrants face the highest poverty rate of any race or ethnicity. According to the PEW Hispanic Center, one third of the children of unauthorized immigrants and a fifth of adult unauthorized immigrants lives in poverty, as compared to 18% poverty rate for children of United States citizens and 10% for adult U.S. citizens (Passel & Cohn, 2009).

The vast majority of illegal immigrants in the U.S. do not have health insurance; therefore, their children are also less likely to have insurance coverage (Garcia, 2001). According to Passel and Cohn (2009), 45% of unauthorized immigrant children do not have health insurance. Additionally, 25% of U.S. born children of illegal immigrants does not have health insurance, as compared to 8% of children of whose parents were born in the U.S. (Passel & Cohn, 2009). The lack of health insurance among poor and immigrant Latinos has a direct impact on their education. Latino students are frequently absent due to their own and their parent’s illnesses. Often, parents are not able to provide glasses, dental care, and preventive medicines.

Highest among all races and ethnicities, 12.5% of immigrant Latino students live with parents with less than 4 years of education (Rong & Preissle, 2009). Since only

50% of parents of Latino students, and 31.7% of immigrant Latino parents have a high school diploma, Hispanic students and immigrants have the lowest percent of parents with a high school diploma (Rong & Preissle, 2009). “In 2000 nearly 80% of Mexican immigrant parents were not high school graduates, and one of seven had less than four years of education” (Rong & Preissle, 2009, p. 113). Passel & Cohn (2009) reported that 29% of illegal immigrants in the U.S. have less than a ninth-grade education.

Fashola and Slavin (2001) point out that the dropout rate for low income Latinos is nearly twice as high as the dropout rate for other low income students. Interestingly, the dropout rate for Hispanic children with no English skills is equally high regardless of economic level. Fifty one percent of Hispanic youth reporting no English knowledge in low income families dropout of school as compared to 53% of Hispanic youth in high income families (Rong & Preissle, 2009).

A. Gonzalez (2003) clarifies that age also plays a major role in immigrant success in school. The older an immigrant is at arrival in the U.S., the more likely they are to drop out of school (A. Gonzalez, 2003; Rong & Preissle, 2009). The dropout rate of children who arrive at 16 or older is 20.4% versus 6.9% for children 10 and younger (Rong & Preissle, 2009). A. Gonzalez (2003) reports that older immigrant students face difficulties in transition when they enter the U.S. from a significantly different education system. In his study of immigrant males age 25 to 64, A. Gonzalez (2003) revealed that the average number of years of education completed drops off dramatically for Mexican children entering the U.S. after age 9. Every year of delayed entry into the U.S. school system results in 25% to 30% less years of school (A. Gonzalez, 2003). In contrast Asian, African, Middle Eastern, and European immigrant children do not demonstrate a

significant decline in educational attainment as a result of later immigration. The average predicted years of schooling for Mexican immigrants was 8.19 years versus 14.34 years for African and Middle Eastern immigrant students. The prediction for Latin American immigrants was 12.18 years of school indicating a lower effect of age of arrival as compared to Mexican immigrant children (A. Gonzalez, 2003).

Almost 70% of Hispanic children speak a language other than English in the home (Rong & Preissle, 2009). Among immigrant children, 95% live in non-English speaking households (Rong & Preissle, 2009). The 2000 census indicates that approximately 40% of Latino children live in a “linguistically isolated” household (Rong & Preissle, 2009, p. 33). In contrast to a bilingual or multilingual home, a “linguistically isolated” home is one in which no one over the age of 14 speaks English (Rong & Preissle, 2009, p. 32). School resources are critical for these children to successfully acquire English since they are not able to develop their English in the home with family. Not surprisingly, youth who live in linguistically isolated homes are more likely to drop out of school (Rong & Preissle, 2009). Social self-sufficiency developed through effective societal relationships is severely limited for “linguistically isolated” children and parents (Rong & Preissle, p. 32). Garcia (2001) states that many Latino students are not proficient enough in English to “participate fully in mainstream all-English classrooms; consequently, many of them fail to succeed in school and large numbers of them drop out of school” (p. 307). Schools must be prepared to provide comprehensive information and access to community resources for Latino students if they are to succeed in education.

Environmental factors

The home environment of all students shapes their early development and maturation. The family is widely considered to be the first and best educator of children (Constantino, 2003). The home environment of minority students is particularly problematic in the impact on child development. Common factors in the environmental category influencing child development include immigration status, transiency, and the marital and employment status of the parents (Ogbu, 1992).

Ogbu (1992) states that “what the children bring to school – their communities’ cultural models or understandings of ‘social realities’ and the educational strategies that they, their families, and their communities use or do not use in seeking education are as important as within-school factors” (p. 5). Unlike other ethnic and racial groups, Latino immigrants are more likely to live in homes with two parents and higher employment rates (Passel & Cohn, 2009). Rather than emphasizing employment and stabilization of family, Rong & Preissle (2009) recommend that Latino initiatives emphasize access to community resources and language instruction.

The immigration status of Latino students complicates their personal lives, their assimilation into American culture, and most importantly, their educational experience. About one quarter of Hispanic immigrants live with parents who are not U.S. citizens (Rong & Preissle, 2009). According to the PEW Research Center (2009), 5.4% of the U.S. labor force consisted of unauthorized immigrants in 2008. Several states in the southeastern United States are ranked among the top 10 states in illegal immigrant work force (Passel & Cohen, 2009). Policymakers and educators must be aware that children of illegal immigrants suffer greater hardships than children in legal, low-income families

(Rong & Preissle, 2009). Illegal immigration status creates a level of anxiety among immigrant students and their families that affects their assimilation into American culture, their successful integration into U.S. schools, and often, their health (Rong & Preissle, 2009).

The 2000 U.S. Census indicated that nearly half a million immigrant children came to the United States after the elementary school phase of education (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). Given the English fluency required to undertake academic tasks, and the different socio-cultural environment in U.S. secondary schools, “this kind of transition poses a severe challenge for older newcomers as well as for their educators” (Rong & Preissle, 2009, p.34). “The lack of continuity, particularly in the linguistic experiences between home and school, coupled with other cultural differences, can often be blamed for academic failure” (Montero-Sieburth & Batt, 2003, p.337).

Educational factors

In addition to the personal and environmental factors that negatively impact the education of Latino youth, there are many factors within the educational environment itself that affect Latino achievement. Because Latino students are often high poverty and highly transient, they attend schools with high teacher turnover, low teacher quality, poor building conditions, inadequate counseling services, technology, minimal parental involvement, and poorly defined curricula (Garcia, 2001; Rong & Preissle, 2009; Sosa, 2001). Within the educational context, there are often too few bilingual teachers, counselors and other staff who understand the difficulties of the immigrant experience (Montero-Sieburth & Batt, 2003).

Research indicates that race and ethnicity have the greatest bearing on academic achievement and educational attainment in comparison to immigration status or other demographic factors (Fuligni, Witkow & Garcia, 2005; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Rong & Preissle, 2009). Racial stereotypes perpetuated by educators and school policies often further hamper students' opportunities to participate in the mainstream culture of schools and thereby, improve their academic trajectories (Rong & Preissle, 2009). Ho (2009) reports that students with strong ethnic identity, who thought that others held a negative perception of their ethnicity, believed that they faced significant barriers to continuing their education.

Attention must be paid to differences in the socioeconomic condition and educational attainment within specific ethnicities and races. For example, substantial variances exist between immigrant students from South America, Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean islands (Garcia, 2001; Rong & Preissle, 2009; Sosa, 2001). Particularly among Mexican and Central American immigrants, older children are expected to assume responsibilities at home. Females are generally charged with caring for younger siblings and maintaining the household. Male students are often required to work outside the home to assist in supporting the family. Shouldering these adult responsibilities leads to developing "adult perspectives prematurely and permanently," creating burdens that prevent these youth from fully participating in and relating to the secondary school experience (Rong & Preissle, 2009, p. 115).

Immigrant status does provide educational advantages for some students (Lucas, 2002). Research indicates that the children of recent immigrants who are professionals and were well educated in their home country are apt to be more successful in school

(Rong & Preissle, 2009). In addition immigrant children and their parents often demonstrate higher motivation to succeed in school and achieve an improved social status. Some immigrant children benefit from the support of mother and father, as well as a connection with positive ethnic culture (Rong & Preissle, 2009). Fuligni, et al. (2005) found that ethnic identity played a significant role in determining minority students' attitudes toward school and learning.

Ogbu (1992) discusses the impact of primary and secondary cultural differences of voluntary and involuntary minorities on school success. He believes that children from different cultural backgrounds begin school with different cultural assumptions about the world in which they live. Minority students may lack certain prerequisite skills and knowledge that were not valued in their native culture (Garcia, 2001). Primary cultural differences exist before the student enters the American school system and are eventually overcome as students assimilate into the mainstream culture. Ogbu (1992) clarifies that primary cultural difference are often easily identified and thereby, lead to the development of educational programs and policies to minimize any negative impact.

In contrast, secondary cultural differences, characteristic of involuntary minorities, develop as a boundary between the United States culture and the native culture, and are often used as a mechanism to protect cultural identity and native language (Ogbu, 1992). Secondary cultural differences are normally extensive and persistent, leading to long term difficulties in education.

Secondary cultural differences evolved as coping mechanisms under 'oppressive conditions,' and the minorities have no strong incentives to give up these differences as long as they believe that they are still oppressed; some of the

cultural differences have taken on a life of their own, and the minorities are not necessarily aware of their boundary-maintaining functions or oppositional quality. (Ogbu, 1992, p. 10)

Anyon (2005) points to the limitations of multi-faceted barriers that prevent advancement for low income and minority families. The dynamic interaction of policies regarding jobs, housing, taxes, and transportation further limits the ability of the poor and minority populations to improve their situation in urban communities (Robinson, 2008). The combined impact of multiple socioeconomic factors and academic issues compounds the effect of each individual aspect. Anyon (2005) believes that U.S. government policies maintain minority poverty in urban areas, overwhelming the ability of educational systems to create sustained improvements in schools. Native born Hispanic children are more likely than any other native minority to live in poverty in inner city areas. (Rong & Preissle, 2009). The combination of personal, educational, and environmental factors creates a barrier wall to academic success that is virtually impossible for Latino students to overcome without substantial and sustained interventions (Portes, Fernandez-Kelly, & Haller, 2008).

Hierarchy of Needs

No study of student achievement and motivation would be complete without reference to Abraham Maslow's theory of human need. Maslow (1954) proposed that needs form the basis for human motivation. Physiological needs of sustenance and shelter serve as the primary need which must be fulfilled before all others. According to Maslow (1954), when human beings are dominated by a specific need their philosophy of the future changes. When physiological needs are satisfied, the need for safety arises.

The attempt to seek safety and survival leads to a preference for the known and familiar over the unknown. In studying the motivation and behavior of American immigrants it is obvious that the needs of food, shelter, and safety must be satisfied before students can focus on academic pursuits. Hispanics of low socioeconomic status are forced to concentrate on survival for themselves and their families, and therefore, frequently place tasks that impact the functioning of the family over educational endeavors (Anastasia, 2001).

According to Maslow's (1954) theory, when physiological and safety needs are met, the need for love, affection and belonging emerge. In the face of continued urbanization and mobilization, human beings crave a sense of belonging. Communities in Schools researchers, Blank, Melaville, and Shah (2003), report that "young people who feel safe, accepted and connected to their schools are more likely to stay in school, develop social skills and do well academically" (p. 37). Constantino (2003) synthesizes the basics needs of today's students as the need "to do well, to be safe, and to feel love" (p.140). When schools make a concerted effort to involve families and communities in schools, they will achieve gains in providing a safe and secure environment for students. Culture, also, plays an important role in creating a sense of belonging (Noel, 2008).

With the physical needs and needs for safety and love are fulfilled, humans exhibit a need for self-esteem and the esteem of others. "Satisfaction of the self-esteem need leads to feelings of self-confidence, worth, strength, capability, and adequacy, and of being useful and necessary in the world" (Maslow, 1954, p. 21). Prejudices and racism that often taunt minority populations erode at the self-esteem of minority students and hinder their efforts to achieve academic success (Cammarota, 2004).

The final need in Maslow's hierarchy is the need for self-actualization. Maslow (1954) describes self-actualization as the need "to become everything that one is capable of becoming" (p. 22). In his discussion of human needs, Maslow also proposes that anything that blocks cognitive capacities is a direct threat to basic needs. The psychologist notes that individuals who are continually forced to fulfill the lower needs of food and shelter may never realize a need for self-actualization or self-esteem. "Gratification becomes as important a concept as deprivation in motivation theory, for it releases the organism from the domination of a relatively more physiological need, permitting thereby the emergence of other more social goals" (Maslow, 1954, pp. 16-17). From Maslow's work one can extrapolate that the basic needs of food and shelter must be satisfied before young people will turn their attentions to cognitive endeavors. Likewise, the need for belonging is critically important in schools to foster a focus on self-esteem and self-actualization.

Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner (1986), child development theorist, proposed that all aspects of a child's environment influence the child's development. He discusses different levels of influence on the child, the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, and the chronosystem of the family ecology. The microsystem refers to the immediate environment in which the child lives, including the immediate family and the child's school or daycare. The mesosystem is the influence of external systems on a child's internal development. The exosystem is defined as the parents' external environments that exert influence through the parent on the child's development. Finally the

chronosystem is a model that investigates the effect of development changes over time on one's environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

Bronfenbrenner (1986) proposes that child development should be viewed from a “person-process-context-model” in which the effect of external environmental factors on the family is as important as individual characteristics of the child in their development (p. 725). The researcher elaborates that the personal characteristics of the parents may be more important than socio-economic status in determining the impact of the environment on the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). His chronosystem model addresses the impact of life transitions on the family and the development of children, indicating the importance of stability in the family's living conditions on positive child development results. The researcher also highlights the changes in family interaction as children transition into new environments, such as high school, and the impact of these family transformations on child development (Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

Bronfenbrenner (1986) notes that the relationship between the family and the school is one of the most powerful factors in child development. He recommends that additional research be conducted to investigate the effect of strategies designed to strengthen family and school connections. He also calls for studies of the experiences of newly immigrant families entering into different cultural, economic, and value systems. Bronfenbrenner (1986) believes that research can promote the “potential of ecologies that sustain and strengthen constructive processes in society, the family, and the self” (p.738).

Social Capital Theory

Many researchers refer to the factors other than ability and intelligence of students as social capital (Bourdieu, 1996; Coleman, 1988). Coleman's (1988) treatise on social

theory describes the three fundamental forms of social capital as obligations and expectations, information channels, and social norms. Social capital is a product of participation in social networks and groups, and includes closure and trustworthiness among participants. Social capital benefits the individual through information, influence, control, and social solidarity (Driesen, 2001). Social capital connects individuals to people and information that can help them solve complex societal problems and facilitate achievement of their goals (Blank, Melaville, & Shah, 2003).

Family background, which is frequently considered a major influence on academic achievement, actually consists of financial, human, and social capital. Coleman (1988) defines human capital as the cognitive environment created by parents' education. Social capital, in comparison, correlates with the relational interactions among family members and their impact on the development of the child (Coleman, 1988). Without social capital in the family, financial and human capital are of little worth. One by-product of social capital in the family and the community, according to Coleman (1988), is human capital in the next generation.

For the last three decades, researchers have studied how social capital benefits students in academic endeavors, particularly in terms of their minority and socio-economic status (Portes, Fernandez-Kelly, & Haller, 2008; Robinson, 2008). Coleman (1988) found that high school dropout rates were lower as a result of the social capital possessed by students and parents. By strengthening the social capital of families through social networks, research indicates that parents have greater access to resources that can facilitate their children's education (Anyon, 2005; Robinson, 2008). Blank, Melaville, and Shah (2003) claim that social capital can increase students' exposure to

role models and life options. “It enhances their sense of connectedness to others, their sense of security and their belief in the future” (p. 9).

Ethnic minorities, in particular, appear to depend more heavily on social capital to succeed in school (Driessen, 2001). Educational researchers contend that minority families’ inability to leverage social capital in schools compounds social inequalities and prevents them from effectively supporting student achievement (Lareau & Weininger, 2003; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Robinson, 2008). Any effort to improve the academic achievement of minority students should include initiatives to increase the social capital of their parents.

Cultural Capital Theory

Developed through Bourdieu’s (1996) education research, the sister concept of social capital is cultural capital. Bourdieu maintained that culture and education play a pivotal role in affirming and reproducing the social class differences (Lareau & Weininger, 2003). Cultural capital is frequently differentiated from educational skills, abilities, and achievement levels. Lareau & Weininger (2003) provide a broader definition of cultural capital to include “the micro-interactional processes through which individuals comply (or fail to comply) with the evaluative standards of dominant institutions such as schools” (p. 568).

Some researchers correlate cultural capital with the knowledge and skills of the middle to upper classes (Camarota, 2004; Driessen, 2001; Lareau & Weininger, 2003). In the education system, researchers contend that teachers communicate more easily with and are more apt to reward students who exhibit upper class attributes, vocabulary, tastes, and styles (Ogbu, 1992; Noel, 2008). Others relate cultural capital in education to the

tendency of teachers to reward positive academic behaviors such as homework completion, behavior, and motivation (Cammarota, 2004). Lareau & Weininger (2003) combine these two approaches contending that cultural capital “allows culture to be used as a resource that provides access to scarce rewards, is subject to monopolization, and, under certain conditions, may be transmitted from one generation to the next” (p. 587).

. Bourdieu’s cultural-political or cultural capital theory points to culture as the primary transmitter of social inequalities. Differences among classes and cultures impact one’s social capital. Lifestyle and cultural characteristics of different ethnicities and groups are passed down from generation to generation. Once solidified in an individual, differences in cultural capital are rarely diminished or augmented through school (Driessen, 2001). In fact schools tend to reward only the cultural capital of the dominant classes over the lower classes. Driessen (2001) states

The manner in which education is organized, the one sided interest of the educational system with this culture, and the presupposition of particular codes and capacities all contribute to an expansion of already existing differences. The cultural capital that education presupposes on the part of its students is largely acquired during primary socialization within the family and upbringing by parents who belong in the dominant culture. (p. 515)

The fit between one’s culture and the culture of the larger society is a source of inequality in social capital. Lareau & Weininger (2003) describe cultural capital as the “imposition” of one social class’s evaluative criteria on less dominant groups (p. 588). In discussing the fit between cultures, Bourdieu (1986) uses the terms *habitus* and *field*. “‘Habitus’ is ‘a system of dispositions’ that results from social training and past

experiences” (Lee & Bowen, 2006, p. 197). A “field” is a system of social relationships that effect a child’s psycho-social development. “When an individual’s ‘habitus’ is consistent with the ‘field’ in which one is operating,” the individual is able to function effectively in their social setting (Lee & Bowen, 2006, p. 197).

In terms of education, the social capital that an individual possess is based on the concordance of the educational “habitus” of the individual with the values and practices of the educational environment in which they operate (Lee & Bowen, 2006). Lareau & Weininger (2003) theorize that based on their social status, students and parents “enter the educational system with dispositional skills and knowledge that differentially facilitate or impede their ability to conform to institutionalized expectations” (p. 588). Students from non-dominant cultures do not possess high levels of cultural capital. Their parents, therefore, will need to make greater efforts to facilitate their child’s successful progress through the education system (Lee & Bowen, 2006). Gurley-Alloway (2009) reports that “social and cultural capital promotes academic achievement, college attendance, and educational attainment. Attending college and earning a college degree exposes people to the values, norms, customs, and possessions of the dominant class” (p. 93). When parents possess high levels of cultural capital through their own education, it strengthens their knowledge of educational processes and their ability to support their child’s educational endeavors.

The dominant culture is central to the curriculum of the education system; therefore minority students who don’t participate in the dominant culture outside of school are less likely to succeed in school (Noel, 2008). Garcia (2001) states that there is a mismatch between the resources the typical Latino student brings to school and the

responses that the school delivers to help the student acquire new knowledge and learn to use it. By involving and educating parents in the dominant culture as transmitted through the education system, schools can begin to compensate for the lack of social capital existent in minority populations. Epstein et al. (2002) states

The way schools care about children is reflected in the way schools care about the children's families. If educators view children simply as students, they are likely to see the family as separate from the school . . . If educators view students as children, they are likely to see both the family and the community as partners with the school in children's education and development. (p. 7)

The primary reason to create school, family and community partnerships is to help children succeed in school and in later life. A school environment that is supportive and welcoming is critical for student success, particularly for immigrant students trying to integrate into a foreign environment (Rong & Preissle, 2009). Garcia (2001) states that "educators must address all of the facets of schools and schooling, including working with parents and other community leaders to create communities of learners where everybody is involved in the education of all students" (p. 326). Gurley-Alloway (2009) states that mechanisms for bridging capital are necessary for individuals of low levels of cultural capital to move to higher positions of status. Goddard's (2003) study of the relationship between performance on high stakes tests and social capital revealed that students achieve success when teacher-student and teacher-parent relationships are characterized by trust and schools provide support.

Social Connections

Underlying the impetus to build school partnerships is the basic theory of social connections. Involvement of parents, schools, and community in the academic life of students is based on the theory of overlapping spheres of influence in a student's life propounded by Epstein et al. (2002). The theory of overlapping spheres of influence indicates that an effective model of school, family, and community partnerships locates the student at the center of the spheres of influence. The student is the primary participant and determinant in their education, social-emotional growth, and ultimate success in school (Epstein, 2010; Epstein et al., 2002).

By building a partnership between parents, school, and community, schools are able to build a caring community around the student (Epstein, 2010). The partnership alone does not produce success. The partnership activities should “engage, guide, energize, and motivate students” to work towards success (Epstein, 2010, p. 82).

In Epstein's (2002) model there are six types of involvement and their purpose in schools: (1) Parenting – to help all families establish a home environment that supports the child as student; (2) Communicating – to design effective forms of home and school communications about school activities and student progress; (3) Volunteering – to recruit and provide opportunities for parents to support schools and student learning; (4) Learning at Home – to provide families with ideas about how to help their student with school work and school related choices; (5) Decision making – to provide parents opportunities to be involved in school decisions; and (6) Collaborating with the Community – to develop partnerships in the community that strengthen school, family and students.

Constantino (2006) discusses the impact of the four spheres of influence, family, peers, individual students, and schools, on student engagement in the educational process. His study of student performance in a suburban high school revealed “five forces for engagement: desires, attitudes, motivation, behaviors, and actions” (Constantino, 2006, p. 27). Students report that the schools themselves play a critical role in engaging students in learning by providing programs that facilitate positive peer interactions and create a sense of belonging in the academic environment.

Many researchers report that parental involvement at school has the highest correlation with student achievement measures (Epstein, et al., 2002; Jeynes, 2003; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Mapp, et. al., 2008). The research clarifies that “the cultural disadvantage experienced by parents who are African American, Hispanic/Latino, low income, or less educated in relation to school-based involvement appears to occur through barriers faced by these parents in regard to being present at school rather than through accrual of fewer benefits when they are able to be present at school” (Lee & Bowen, 2006, p. 212). Regardless of socio-economic status, race or ethnicity the benefits of parent involvement are broad (Jeynes, 2003). Jeynes (2003) elaborates that parental involvement positively affects all levels of academic achievement and benefits Latinos and African-Americans the most.

Garcia (2001) urges that educational reform that supports Latino students must be systemic, comprehensive and informed. Improvement strategies should be developed and implemented based on knowledge of children, their communities, and the schools’ ability to serve the students. Constantino (2006) clarifies that schools themselves dictate the quality of relationships and engagement of parents in their child’s education. As Ogbu

(1992) points out, curriculum alone is not sufficient to guarantee Latino student success. “The meaning and value that students from different cultural groups associate with the process of formal education vary and are socially transmitted by their ethnic communities” (Ogbu, 1992, p. 7). Constantino (2006) contends that schools should not try to “fix” students but rather, guide students and their families to reshape and rethink the school experience (p. 26).

Rong and Preissle (2009) assert that promotion of mutual respect and cooperation between schools and immigrant communities and inclusion of immigrant families in school decisions, helps children maintain a healthy sense of self. “Identifying and reducing barriers among African American, Latino/Hispanic, low-income, and less educated parents should be an emphasis of strategies to engage parents *at school* in their children’s education” (Rong & Preissle, 2009, p. 214). Constantino (2006) states that “when schools and families work together in a collaborative partnership, students begin to receive the message that school is important, thus legitimizing their own work” (p. 24). Although school family connections are not the only mechanism to support student engagement, Constantino (2006) believes that a commitment to family-school connections is a “powerful beginning in shaping an environment in and around schools, which enhances the opportunities, engagement, achievement, and ultimately, the success of every student” (p. 30).

Social Identity Theory

Individual identity is actively constructed as a result of interactions with society, community, and the environment (Noel, 2008). Identity development, including ethnicity, is a critical step in adolescent development. Ethnic or cultural identity is

particularly important for American immigrant teenagers (Fuligni, Witkow, & Garcia, 2005; Lareau & Weininger, 2003). “Ethnic minority adolescents often have cultural backgrounds and traditions that differ from the dominant norms of the United States, and many of these youth are in groups that are derogated and discriminated against by the larger society” (Fuligni et al., 2005, p. 4).

Fuligni et al. (2005) describes the different dimensions of social identity as centrality and private regard. Centrality is defined as the extent to which one’s ethnicity is important to one’s identity (Fuligni et al., 2005). Private regard reflects an individual’s feelings about belonging to a particular ethnic group (Fuligni et al., 2005). These concepts differ in their impact on the adjustment and well-being of minority students and their attitude toward academic achievement.

In the study of minority high school students by Fuligni et al. (2005), Mexican immigrants demonstrated a significantly higher ethnic centrality and regard than their peers of European or Chinese descent. According to the study, the strength of an adolescent’s ethnic identity is moderately associated with positive academic attitudes:

Adolescents who reported that their ethnic background was a more central aspect of their self and an identity for which they felt positive regard also indicated stronger beliefs in the utility of education and school success, a higher level of intrinsic interest in school, a greater level of identification with their schools, and a stronger belief of being respected and valued by their schools (Fuligni, 2005, p. 17).

Other research indicates a link to the disassociation of minority students from academic achievement in school (Ho, 2009). Some Latino students are significantly

handicapped by their low sense of self-worth. Their sense of self is determined by the feedback they receive from society as compared with the societal norm (Major, 2006). “According to social identity theory, minority students who identify with one of the labeled minorities in a heterogeneously populated country tend to believe they are not part of the in-group, the group that holds social, political, and economic power and sets the norms of what is considered success” (Major, 2006, p. 31). In contrast, Fuligni et al. (2005) found that the specific ethnic labels selected by minority students were unrelated to their beliefs about their academic abilities and attitudes. In his study, ethnic minority students appear to make an effort to break away from the stereotypic achievement expectations imposed on their group by American society (Fuligni et al., 2005). The existence of a positive social identity appears to lead to positive feelings about school and achievement.

Ho (2009) reveals that Latino and African American students’ perceptions of the interracial climate in their school often affects how they believe other ethnicities view their ethnic group. Minority students’ ethnic perception appears to be dependent on the level of concentration within the larger school culture (Fuligni et al., 2005). According to Ho’s (2009) study, when Latino students felt their high school had a positive interracial climate, they perceived fewer personal and external barriers to continuing their education (Ho, 2009).

Obgu (1992) points to the fate of “involuntary” Latino immigrants, those who came to the United States under subjugation, or due to repression in their homeland (p. 8). These immigrants experience less economic and social opportunities, sometimes leading to oppositional or self-defeating behaviors. Latino immigrants often feel they are

worse off than they were in their native country due to factors beyond their control. Some immigrant minorities believe that even successful minority students are not fully accepted by Whites and do not receive equal rewards or opportunities for advancement (Ogbu, 1992).

Ho (2009) recommends that high schools construct programs to foster positive interracial culture in high schools. Students from marginalized ethnic groups will benefit from programs that “alleviate their concern about how others perceive members of their ethnic groups and that buffer the negative effects of having a poor public regard” (Ho, 2009, p. 61). Because the strength of a student’s ethnic identification influences their academic adjustment and level of motivation, the research also advocates for services that promote healthy ethnic identity and tolerance among ethnic and racial groups (Ogbu, 1992; Zhou, 1997).

Assimilation

Assimilation is the process by which an individual adapts to a new culture (Rong & Preissle, 2009). The classic assimilation model practiced in American schools in the twentieth century advocated for the elimination of ethnic identity and the construction of English only approaches to instruction. Traditionally, U.S. public schools have “strongly rejected conserving and maintaining the native language and cultural values of immigrant children; the preference for emphasizing Americanization in curricula and instruction aimed at socializing immigrants to the norms of the dominant culture can be traced to the country’s genesis” (Rong & Preissle, 2009, p. 15). Through classic assimilation, foreigners could expect upward mobile progression into U.S. society for each successive generation. Self motivation and self sufficiency are key elements of successful

assimilation (Rong & Preissle, 2009). In contrast, Montero-Sieburth and Batt (2001) express a more pessimistic opinion of the school role in the lives of immigrants:

Schools are viewed as ‘assimilative agents’ whose purpose is to shun their cultural values and steer their children away from their cultural roots. . . . Instead of viewing education as a means for upward social mobility, certain involuntary minorities internalize the schooling experience as one that empowers the oppressor and maintains the status quo. (p. 339)

The terms consonant and dissonant acculturation are used to contrast the manner in which humans adjust to the language and culture of the new society. Individuals with strong social capital and family networks tend to experience consonant, positive acculturation. Dissonant acculturation occurs when children acculturate faster than their parents. It is often experienced by youth from middle to lower class immigrant families without strong parental or community support. As they become Americanized, middle and lower class youth are often disconnected from their parents, and thereby, their own culture (Rong & Preissle, 2009).

Without a cultural reference point, young people often lose their sense of self-worth. Portes et al. (2008) propose a theory of segmented assimilation derived from three parts: “a) an identification of the major exogenous factors at play; b) a description of the principal barriers confronting today’s children of immigrants; c) a prediction of the distinct paths expected from the interplay of these forces” (p. 6). The exogenous factors that affect a student’s assimilation include the family’s human capital, the environment in which they arrive, and the composition of the family. Complicating matters even further, students whose families do not possess social capital in their home country are more

likely to suffer downward assimilation in their new country. Downward assimilation associated with dissonant acculturation often resulting in lower income level, dysfunctional behavior, and at the extremes, dropping out of school, teen pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, gang activity, or incarceration (Ogbu, 1992).

Some Latinos choose to maintain their native language to gain political power and shun assimilation into what they perceive to be a discriminatory society. Mexican Americans may be particularly resistant to assimilation into Anglo culture due to “their history of conquest, sustained discrimination, and subordination to American society” (Montero-Sieburth & Batt, 2003). Some research indicates that students who rapidly assimilate into American culture are often steered into an oppositional subculture; whereas students who remain affiliated with the ethnic culture of their parents are more successful academically (Montero-Sieburth & Batt, 2003).

Rong and Preissle (2009) describe the overassimilation or rapid Americanization as “an adoption of U.S. materialistic popular culture and adversarial youth subcultures that interferes with academic achievement and fosters underage labor, excessive extracurricular activities, teenage pregnancy, and substance abuse” (p. 14). When students view the American educational school system as a threat to their ethnicity, they may engage in defensive strategies of non-learning. To counteract these reactionary tendencies, Ogbu (1992) recommends that schools implement special programs that increase “accommodation without assimilation,” wherein students participate in two language frames of reference without losing their cultural identity (p. 12).

Pluralism

In the 1960s, minority groups were labeled as suffering from cultural deprivation, based on the premise that their lack of social and cultural capital was due to the cultural poverty in which they lived. Educators of the time believed there was a single, best way of knowing, a single standard of knowledge (Noel, 2008). School administrators were charged with enacting structural and social changes to “fix” the African American, Latino, and Asian students in their schools. In the 1970s and 1980s, cultural difference models of reform arose, proposing that minority students possess cultural values and linguistic codes of their own. This approach was in direct contrast to the subtractive model of cultural deficit. Researchers such as Montero-Sieburth and Batt (2003) propose that Latino students are not necessarily culturally deprived, but rather participate in a different set of cultural experiences that does not match the expectations of the American school system.

Pluralism is an alternate model of immigrant integration into the U.S. system (Rong & Preissle, 2009). The pluralistic model is a “multidimensional and multifaceted process with micro-level variables such as race, class, gender, and age interacting with macro-level contextual variables such as laws, policies, the socioeconomic and political environment, immigration history, and the reception in communities where the immigrants settle” (Rong & Preissle, 2009, p. 13). Pluralism is frequently associated with multiculturalism and framed by belief in the preservation of minority cultures, the protection of minority rights, and the value of cultural diversity (Davies, 1999). Moll (2010) suggests that educators invest in the production of new pedagogical methods that benefit from, rather than resist, the demographic changes in society.

One example of pluralism is selective acculturation, combining acquisition of English language and American culture while maintaining the native tongue and preserving cultural traditions with the family. Latino students are often viewed as language deficient because our schools do not recognize the benefits of bi-literacy. Research indicates that selective acculturation has a positive impact on student achievement. Bilingualism is associated with a higher grade point average, enrollment in post-secondary institutions, and higher self-esteem (Moll, 2010). “Supporters of the pluralism model have posited that promoting mutual respect and cooperation between schools and immigrant communities, including immigrant families in school decision making, help children to maintain a healthy identity as well as a social and psychological well-being” (Rong & Preissle, 2009, p. 16). Moll (2010) states that when the culture and language of minority students are validated in the educational system, students merge their home and community self with their academic self. The result is a more engaged student who sees the benefit of their culture and heritage within the context of their academic life.

Ogbu (1992) contends that minority students “do not succeed or fail only because of what schools do or do not do, but also because of what the community does. The social structure and relationship within the minority communities could be a significant influence on students’ educational orientations and behaviors” (p. 12). Multiple researchers (Blank, Melaville, & Shah, 2003; Constantino, 2006; Ogbu, 1992; Rong & Preissle, 2009) advocate that minority communities must play an active role in establishing role models, systems for rewards and recognition, and placing responsibility for learning on the student. Maintaining the culture of immigrant students and their

families, while funding efforts to strengthen minority social structures and organizations, can be very beneficial in reinforcing motivation and achievement behaviors of minority students. The local community network and minority organizations have the power to send a strong message that education is important and provide concrete evidence that academic achievement is crucial for social and economic success (Rong & Preissle, 2009).

Equity in Education

Multiple sources of research indicate that equity in education is a key component of successful schools. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (2010) proposes that educational excellence occurs when “programs challenge learners-regardless of their race, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or socio-economic status-to perform at the boundary of their individual abilities and to test and extend their limits in school, at home, at work, and as citizens” (para. 2). Educational excellence is dependent on the existence of educational equity. Education equity is defined as:

the educational policies, practices, and programs necessary to (a) eliminate educational barriers based on gender, race/ethnicity, national origin, color, disability, age, or other protected group status; and (b) provide equal educational opportunities and ensure that historically underserved or under-represented populations meet the same rigorous standards for academic performance expected of all children and youth. (Wisconsin, 2010, para. 3)

Garcia (2001) states that “schools can either enhance and sustain every student’s opportunity to learn to optimal levels or they can impede the critical chances students need in order to succeed in school” (p. 326). Noel (2008) claims that much of the

achievement gap in American schools can be directly linked to the inequalities in schooling experienced by minority populations. Effective equity strategies include involving parents who represent the diversity in the community and developing and providing inclusive curriculum, extracurricular activities and student services that promote resiliency while reducing prejudice and increasing self-understanding and positive identity development (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2010, para. 4).

In effort to establish equity in education, schools should provide information regarding schooling, culture, higher education, and the world of work, as well as examples of rules, policies, and communication vehicles. Delivering equitable counseling, guidance, other student services, such as educational planning and career exploration options promote motivation and a focus on long term goals among minority student populations. Montero-Sieburth and Batt (2001) stress that the relationships between educators and families are critical to equalizing opportunities for minority students. Promoting equity and nurturing diversity through public information and school organizations and activities bridges cultural differences and leads to higher engagement among students and their families in the school environment. When the parents of Latino students regard the American education system as fairer than what they experienced in their homeland they are more willing to trust and invest in the education of their students (Montero-Sieburth & Batt, 2001).

Even as Latinos are on the verge of becoming a majority population in many areas, Latino students are frequently treated as second class citizens in schools around the country. Driessen (2001) states that the educational system in the Western world plays a

key role in reproducing existing social inequities “independent of intelligence or capacity” (p. 515). According to Ochoa and Cadeiro-Kaplan (2004), the percent of Latino students underachieving in our schools has changed very little since the 1970’s because there is a lack of status equalization. “Status equalization is measured by a student’s sense of belonging in all aspects of the school curricula and extracurricular activities” (Ochoa & Cadeiro-Kaplan, 2004, p.28).

Achievement of Latino students is frequently analyzed “from a dominant white Anglo cultural research paradigm based on ideological assumptions that range from ‘saving students’ to providing more ‘compensatory or remedial educational’ opportunities” (Montero-Sieburth & Batt, 2001, p. 332). This “Eurocentric approach” defines Latino success in terms of the student’s English-speaking competency and fails to recognize nontraditional ways of learning (Montero-Sieburth & Batt, 2001). Latino youth often report that the presumption in schools that they are intellectually inferior is the greatest obstacle to their high school success. Cammarota (2006) claims the impact of the “stereotype threat” is augmented by media and visual images that bombard the Latino student, eventually impacting their self image and conceptualization of their future potential (p. 3).

In the United States academic performance is determined by a merit-based formula shaped by individualism: the power of the individual to change their destiny through outstanding effort and personal merit. Juxtaposed with the barriers created by low linguistic proficiency, low socio-economic background, and low expectations of teachers, Latino students are handicapped by the very system in which they attempt to succeed. “The ethos of rugged individualism in the U.S. school system obscures the

institutionalized ills of racism by suggesting that the only barrier to success is individual commitment” (Cammarota, 2006, p. 2). By continuing to ignore the plight of immigrant children, educators augment their lack of success in the educational system. Efforts to establish an equitable education system for all minorities is a key element in improving their academic achievement (Cammarota, 2004; Ogbu, 1992).

No discussion of equity in education would be complete without a review of current equity initiatives promulgated by the No Child Left Behind legislation of 2002. Noel (2008) believes that NCLB has led to an inadequate restructuring of schools to bridge the performance gap between Caucasian students and minority populations. Unfortunately the majority of school efforts to achieve Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) are limited to efforts to improve test scores. These efforts often lead to tracking and subtractive schooling rather than bridging of inequitable resources and facilities (Noel, 2008).

Parental Involvement

Parental involvement is considered by most researchers to play a pivotal role in student success at all levels of education (Blank, Melaville & Shah, 2003; Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Constantino, 2006; Epstein et al., 2002; Jeynes, 2003; Lareau & Weininger, 2003; Mapp et. al. 2008; Portes et al. 2008). Jeynes (2003) states that research supports the positive influence of parent involvement across parental levels of income, education, and racial heritage. Parental involvement impacted all aspects of student achievement, grade point average (GPA), standardized tests, and other academic measures in Jeynes’ (2003) study. Constantino (2006) contends that parent involvement also improves attendance, homework completion, behavior, attitude, graduation rate, and

post-secondary enrollment. Blank, et al. (2003) confirm that consistent parent involvement across all grade levels is one of the strongest predictors of academic success.

Social class and culture impact the likelihood and success of parental interaction in education (Lareau & Weininger, 2003). Jenkins (2004) identified several barriers to parental involvement in their children's academic lives including lack of transportation, communication and parenting skills. Parents from lower socio-economic status may also be less likely to intervene on their children's behalf because they lack clear understanding of educational terminology and systems. Parents with low levels of education tend to believe that education is the territory of professional educators and defer decisions to persons in authority positions (Lareau & Weininger, 2003).

"The stronger the embedding of the parent in the dominant culture and the more oriented their child rearing is toward the dominant culture, the more comfortable their children feel at school and the more they benefit from that which is being taught" (Driessen, 2001, p. 515). Lee and Bowen (2006) confirmed that parents whose culture most closely resembled the school culture were consistently more involved in schools. The researchers suggested that parents from a nondominant culture may believe that racism or other psychological barriers can negate their involvement in the education system (Lee & Bowen, 2006).

Lareau & Weininger (2003) report that upper and middle class parents routinely interact with educational institutions on their children's behalf. As a result of their interactions, these parents transmit a sense of entitlement and an expectation of benefit from educational experiences. Because so many Hispanic students live in poverty and have parents without a high school education, it is less likely that their parents will be

substantively involved in the children's education (Garcia, 2001). The majority of Latino parents report that the lack of parental involvement in their child's academic achievement is a critical determinant of their academic success (PEW, 2009). Jesse, Davis & Pokorny (2004) found that Latino parents did not volunteer or participate in decision making at the schools, so communication tended to be one way: school to home. In turn, Latino students do not learn to effectively negotiate within the educational organization. Their proclivity to drop out of high school or prematurely end post-secondary studies may be a direct result of a lack of social capital transmitted from their parents.

Although many Latino children are U.S. citizens, their parents may not have legal citizenship. Parents who are illegal immigrants are often afraid to enter U.S. schools and interact with adults they do not trust. While school personnel may perceive the lack of interaction as ignorance or lack of interest, the parents are trying to protect themselves and their children from unnecessary scrutiny (Rong & Preissle, 2009).

While parents need educational and social capital to effectively support their children in school, Lee & Bowen's (2006) research demonstrated that parental expectations are not significantly different between ethnic and racial minorities and European Americans. Lee & Bowen (2006) reveal that African American, Latino, and low-income families often strongly believe that parental involvement with homework is important. The willingness of minority parents to further their children's education in the home should be respected and incorporated into efforts to assist minority students. Lee & Bowen assert that schools should "recognize and exploit the existence of cultural variations in parental involvement" (p. 214). Since minority parents are less likely to

attend school events, researchers (Constantino, 2006; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Kuykendall, 2004) suggest that schools create opportunities for parent contacts outside of school.

According to Robinson (2008) “building leadership capacity in parents realizes an untapped resource for schools” (p. 55).

Addressing the achievement gap through parent involvement strategies . . . may involve recognizing the common values of parents and schools and modifying the ways in which opportunities and resources for parent involvement at school and at home are made available to parents. (Lee & Bowen, 2006, p. 215)

The effort to promote family involvement and engagement positively affects the attitudes and perceptions of parents, and in due course, their students (Constantino, 2003).

“NCLB serves as a catalyst and provides a window of opportunity for local educational entities to develop parental involvement activities” (Robinson, 2008, p. 149). Robinson clarifies that the lack of funding for NCLB initiatives often limits district efforts to implement and/or support parent involvement programs (Robinson, 2008). The researcher recommends that more extensive attention to specific racial and ethnic groups be a focus in future parent involvement initiatives (Robinson, 2008).

High School Graduation

Earning a high school diploma has long been recognized as an educational achievement that empowers young adults to secure economic freedom (Kaiser, 2009).

“In light of the negative economic consequences of dropping out of school for the individual and society, facilitating school completion for all students has become a major priority for educators and policy makers nationwide” (Kaiser, 2009, pp. 33 - 34).

According to the PEW Research Center (2009), 17.2% of Latino teens had not graduated

from high school or received an equivalent certificate and were not enrolled in school as compared to 8.3% of all youth.

“The concern over graduation rate is well-justified, as dropping out of school has been linked empirically to a host of negative consequences such as reduced job prospects and financial well-being, increased public financial assistance, and higher rates of incarceration” (Kaiser, 2009, p.35). A. Gonzalez’s (2003) research on the impact of age of entry on education and wage attainment reports that the income benefit for Mexican and Latin American immigrants completing high school offsets the additional costs of Latino students to the American educational system. In fact the researcher contends that Latino immigrants’ benefits are larger than any other major subgroup of immigrants, rationalizing greater emphasis on schooling initiatives for Latinos (A. Gonzalez, 2003). The higher income earned by Latino high school graduates translates into a reduction of those eligible for welfare and governmental subsidies. The Alliance for Excellent Education (2007) stated that the drop- out rate in one decade could result in a loss of \$1.5 trillion dollars to the United States economy.

Latino students frequently arrive in American schools ill-prepared to learn due to limited educational experiences in their native countries, an inadequate command of the English language, and lack of literacy in their native language (Garcia, 2001; Portes, et al., 2008). Coupled with poverty and transiency and poor resources in their American schools, Hispanic children often opt out of the high school experience. “Educational researchers have argued that NCLB, a mainstream, standardized educational practice with a one-test-fits-all-assessment, rely on a decontextualization model that ignores the social and economic variations in the student population and the complex realities in schools;

therefore, schools cannot meet children's personal, social, cultural, and community-based needs" (Rong & Preissle, pp. 47 - 48).

Multiple dropout prevention programs have evolved over the past thirty years to improve high school success for minority students. One recurring theme in these programs is the importance of establishing positive adult relationships for at risk students to reduce disaffection and dropout (Fashola & Slavin, 2001). Personalization, increasing "the holding power of the school by creating meaningful personal bonds between students and teachers and among students," is a common thread in successful intervention programs (Fashola & Slavin, 2001, p. 94). The use of small-group interventions and mentoring are frequently used to increase students' connection to the schools (Fashola & Slavin, 2001). Another element common to successful drop-out prevention programs involves helping students set goals and make action plans for reaching an attainable future.

A successful model of a dropout prevention program is the Achievement for Latinos through Academic Success (ALAS) centered in primarily Latino Los Angeles communities (Fashola & Salvin, 2001). This program combines family, community, and school interventions.

Family strategies included use of community resources, parent training in school participation, and training to guide and monitor adolescents. Parents were offered workshops on school participation and teen behavior management. The program also focused on integrating school and home needs with community services, and advocating for the student and parent when necessary. (Fashola & Slavin, 2009, p. 76)

The ALAS program is an example of an effective intervention for Latino high school students. Programs which promote positive ethnic identity, the development of social and cultural capital, and empower parental involvement in the academic lives of students offer potential for improving the graduation rate of Latino students (Constantino, 2006; Epstein et al.; 2002; Epstein, 2010; Flor Ada & Smith, 2001; Gonzalez, M. L., 2002; Fuligni et al., 2005; Garcia, 2009; Ho, 2009; Jeynes, 2003).

Post-Secondary Enrollment

Despite efforts to improve academic achievement, Latino students continue to lag behind their counterparts in successful completion of high school and post-secondary enrollment. According to Garcia (2001) college-qualified Hispanic graduates are less likely than qualified White, Black, and Asian/Pacific students to pursue college admission. Only 49% of unauthorized immigrants age 18 to 24 were enrolled in college in 2008, as compared to 71% of U.S. born citizens in the same age bracket (Passel & Cohn, 2009). Multiple factors affect minority students' decision to forego a college education. Lack of money is consistently reported as a deterrent to college enrollment for low-income minority students (PEW, 2009). Other reasons reported by a majority of Latino students as factors in their decision to stop their education include poor English skills and dislike of school (Gurley-Alloway, 2009). In contrast, social capital and cultural preparation were found to be more important motivators than availability of funds for Latino students who decided to enroll in college (Gurley-Alloway, 2009).

Because Latino students under perform in the classroom and on standardized tests, their acceptance into colleges and universities lags far behind other minorities. Gurley-Alloway (2009) contends that the continued exposure to poverty, drugs, and

substandard living conditions leads minority students to devalue sacrifices to achieve long term goals. In her research, Gurley-Alloway suggests that Latinos and Blacks must develop abstract rather than concrete ideals about success and achievement because they do not have a family history or other role models to influence their actions and academic habits.

Parental income and educational success are other predictors of student academic success and educational attainment. In his study of ethnic minority high school students, Fuligni et al. (2005) discovered that parents of students of European descent were more likely to have college degrees than the parents of Chinese and Mexican. Portes et al. (2008) contend that within our “knowledge-based economy,” immigrant children whose parents lack human capital are more likely to end up without advanced degrees, stagnated in low paying jobs (p. 4). Gurley-Alloway’s (2009) study of minority college students indicated that the motivation to have a better life than their parents influenced many students’ decision to pursue a college education. “African American students (60%) were somewhat more likely than were Latino students (51%) to desire a bachelor’s degree, but a greater percentage of Latino students (46%) desired to earn a graduate degree compared to African American students (30%)” (Gurley-Alloway, 2009, p. 90).

In her research Gurley-Alloway (2009) discovered that without college planning assistance, almost half of the study respondents would not have attended college even with guaranteed tuition funding. In addition, the minority students in the Gurley-Alloway (2009) research reported that student visits to college campuses, college fairs, and college representative visits to high schools were the most significant variables to the type of college attended.

The current political climate in the United States, particularly in states such as Arizona, does not support special initiatives to facilitate immigrant post-secondary education, furthering an atmosphere of mistrust among immigrant populations in American schools (Montero-Sieburth & Batt, 2001). Federal and state funds to support Latino enrollment have diminished significantly in recent years as the anti-immigration dialogue mounts. To offset the negativity surrounding their enrollment in post-secondary institutions, Latino students will need increased support from their high school and their parents. Programs which educate minority families regarding the college enrollment process and provide opportunities to visit colleges and interact with college representatives are vital to increasing the percentage of Latino students completing college degrees.

Legal context

The protection of equal rights for minority populations is well-grounded in law via the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment (U.S. Const., amend. XIV). Originally crafted to guarantee the rights of freed slaves, the Equal Protection Clause has dramatically influenced the American education system. *Mendez v. Westminster* (1946) was the first successful challenge to the segregation of Mexicans in schools in California. *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) was the first landmark case to provide for equal educational opportunities for African American.

Plyler v. Doe (1978) was the landmark case that guaranteed equal educational opportunities to all Latinos regardless of immigration status. This case established the strict-scrutiny test for determining if classifications can be protected by the Equal Protection Clause. The justices ruled that “without an education, these undocumented

children “[a]lready disadvantaged as a result of poverty, lack of English-speaking ability, and undeniable racial prejudices, . . . will become permanently locked into the lowest socio-economic class” (*Plyler v. Doe*, 1978, para. 30).

The sum of these pivotal legal cases must result in more responsive educational structures and curriculum that offer minority student populations opportunities equal to their White peers. Moll (2010) asserts that in the current educational climate, “educational resources and opportunities must include integrating their language and cultural experiences into the social and intellectual fabric of schools” (p. 454).

Summary

Chapter II of the dissertation summarizes important literature regarding student achievement, social and cultural capital, characteristics of Latino students, social connection theory, acculturation and assimilation. Strategies that promote equity in education including community in schools, multicultural education, and parent education and involvement are discussed. Existing research regarding the role and influence of the parent liaison position in schools is also presented. Chapter III presents the methodology for the study of the impact of the parent liaison position on Latino graduation rate and parent involvement. The fourth chapter of the dissertation will present the quantitative and qualitative data resulting from the study. Chapter V will summarize the results and provide insight and expectations for future studies.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This research study investigated the impact of the parent liaison on the graduation rate and parent involvement of Latino students in a suburban high school in the southeast. Chapter I of this study provided an overview of the Latino student experience in high schools in the United States, the statement of the problem, a review of pertinent literature and a brief explanation of the methodology to be employed in the study. Chapter II afforded a more detailed review of current literature regarding academic achievement, parent involvement, cultural assimilation, and other essential components of Latino student achievement. Chapter III clearly delineates the methodology to be used in the study.

The parent liaison position is funded through Title III funds of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (2002). Use of a Spanish-speaking parent liaison in schools with a high concentration of Latino students is not a common practice in the southeastern portion of the United States. In some schools the liaison position is used to improve parent communication with the general student population, not tied to a defined race or ethnicity, or the liaison is used to fulfill various clerical functions in the school. Qualitative research exists to support the use of the parent facilitator to improve communication between schools and Latino parents, particularly at the elementary and middle school level. Little quantitative or qualitative data exists to support the use of the liaison to facilitate the academic achievement and graduation rate of Latino high school students. This research study was structured to measure the statistical impact of the

liaison on the graduation rate of Latino seniors in suburban high schools with access to a Spanish speaking parent liaison as compared to suburban high schools without a parent liaison. A Friedman's analysis of variance statistical analysis was used to measure the effect of the liaison role on students' high school graduation rate.

The second portion of the study was designed to provide anecdotal evaluations of the impact of the parent liaison on Latino student graduation rate and parent involvement. In this part of the study, a sampling of Latino parents was surveyed to determine the level of involvement of the liaison in engaging parents in the school environment. Their responses were compared to responses from Latino parents in schools without a parent liaison. In addition the parent liaisons at several high schools were interviewed to determine the actions taken in each school to facilitate student achievement and high school graduation and perceptions of the impact of their actions.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The following research questions guided this study:

1. Does access to a parent liaison increase the graduation rate of Latino students in suburban schools?
2. Does access to a parent liaison increase the parental involvement of Latino parents in suburban schools?

Hypotheses

H₀₁: Access to a parent liaison in a high school setting does not impact the graduation rate of Latino students in suburban high schools.

H₀₂: Access to a parent liaison does not increase the parental involvement of Latino parents in suburban high schools.

Research Design

The research was a mixed method design, involving analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data. The mixed method approach enriched the study and permitted triangulation of data. A comprehensive analysis of qualitative and quantitative data increased the reliability of the data and its generalization to the greater population.

The quantitative segment of the research was causal-comparative and sought to demonstrate the impact of the parent liaison's actions on a primary indicator of academic achievement, in this case, successful completion of high school. The graduation rate of Latinos in suburban high schools with a Spanish speaking parent liaison was compared to the graduation rate of Latinos in the high schools prior to implementation of the liaison program. The dependent variable in each statistical analysis were the graduation rate Latino students and the involvement of their parents in their academic lives. The independent variables was the existence of the parent liaison in the school.

The differences in the graduation rate before and after implementation of the parent liaison were analyzed by a Friedman's analysis of variance using SPSS 18 software. Only schools that had employed a liaison for at least 2 years were included in the study. The statistical analysis is limited to five schools in the area with continuous employment of a Spanish speaking liaison.

The parent surveys (Appendices A and B) provided quantitative data regarding the parent liaison's impact on Latino parent involvement. Parents of Latino students in five high schools with a liaison were surveyed to determine the amount of their interaction with the parent liaison and their perception of the impact of the liaison on their child's high school graduation. In addition, parents of Latino students in two

schools without a parent liaison were surveyed to determine their perceptions of the potential benefits of access to a Spanish-speaking parent liaison. The two schools without a parent liaison were selected due to the size of their sample population of Latino seniors. Students whose parents participated in the survey were entered in a raffle for a netbook computer.

Finally, the qualitative portion of the study included interviews (Attachment C) of the parent liaison in three of the five high schools included in the study. The high school with a Title I parent liaison was not included because the liaison's activities and priorities result in a different job description. The liaison position in one school was vacant during the time of the research. The parent liaison interviews were designed to provide anecdotal data on the liaison's perceptions of their impact on Latino student graduation rate and parent involvement. The interviews were conducted in the spring and participants were given a gift card to compensate for their time.

Sample/Participants

According to the state's School Council Institute, Latino students comprise 16% of the identified school district's student population as of 2010 (GSCI, 2011). The suburban, metropolitan school district in which the study was based is very diverse in terms of racial and ethnic demographics and socio-economic distribution. Eight of the sixteen high schools in the district employ a parent liaison. Seven of the eight parent liaisons are Spanish-speaking (High Schools A, B, E, F, G, H and J). Only five of the high schools have employed a parent liaison for four or more years (High Schools A, B, E, F, and H). The demographic composition of each high school as of the 2009-2010 school year is delineated in *Table 1* below. The Latino population in these schools varies

from 8- to 21% of the total school population. The percentage of students who are considered to be socio-economically disadvantaged ranges from 24- to 81% percent (GCIS, 2011). There is a wide variation in the demographic composition and socio-economic status of students throughout the district. High Schools E, F, G, and H represent a more diverse ethnic and socio-economic environment with Latinos comprising 13- to 45% of enrollment (GA DOE, 2009-2010 Report Card). See *Table 1* on the following page for demographic detail.

Instrumentation

The study consisted of a statistical analysis of high school graduation rates, paper and pencil parent surveys and interviews of the parent liaisons in several high schools. Graduation rate data was retrieved from the state's Department of Education data reporting portal. The graduation rate of Latino students for the two years preceding the implementation of the parent liaison was compared to graduation rate during the first year of implementation and two years later through a Friedman's analysis of variance using SPSS version 20.0 software.

The parent survey questions were developed by the researcher and validated by the district supervisor for Foreign Language and ESOL, the coordinator for liaisons, and a former parent liaison. The questions were developed based on an investigation of other surveys including those recommended by the Harvard Family Research Project (Westmoreland, Bouffard, O'Carroll, & Rosenberg, 2009). Survey questions were designed to align with the research questions. Two surveys were developed: Survey A (Appendix A) for use with parents of Latino students enrolled in schools with a parent liaison, and Survey B (Appendix B) for use with parents of Latino students enrolled in

schools without a parent liaison. The survey questions were also translated to Spanish by a qualified translator. Parents were provided both the English and Spanish versions of the survey.

Table 1

High School Demographic Data

(GA DOE, Report Card, 2009-2010).

HIGH SCHOOL	TOTAL ENROLLMENT	% WHITE	% BLACK	% LATINO	% ASIAN	% FRE	% ELL
A	1744	54	26	12	8	32	2.7
B	2076	37	40	13	10	39	5.3
C	1806	67	18	8	3	25	.9
D	2241	62	22	9	6	24	1.6
E	2240	18	53	23	5	60	7
F	1772	8	45	45	2	81	15
G	2113	11	67	21	1	68	7
H	2113	17	68	13	1	64	5
I	2249	23	65	10	1	50	2
J	2602	46	36	13	5	39	3

Questions 1 through 4 of both parent surveys were multiple choice and identified the parent's gender, the high school that the student attended, the language most often spoken at home, the student's academic performance as measured by grades. In Parent

Survey A, questions 5, 6, and 7 were also multiple choice and measured the parent's visits to school, knowledge of the parent liaison and most frequent reason for interacting with the liaison. Questions 6 and 7 were changed slightly in Parent Survey B to measure parent's knowledge of the availability of a Latino parent liaison at other schools and reasons they would use the resource of a Latino parent liaison. Questions 8 through 14 of the surveys were based on the 5-point Likert scale and asked for parent perceptions regarding the impact of the interactions with the liaison on their involvement in school and their child's academic progress. Questions 8, 9, 10 and 12 correspond to research question 2 and ask parents to rate whether the availability of the liaison has increased (Survey A) or would increase (Survey B) their visits to school and comfort level with visiting the school. Parent Survey Question 11 and 13 correspond to research question 2 and inquire about parent's communication with the school, including communication regarding the academic progress of their child. The final question, 14, queries parents about the impact of the liaison on their understanding of policies, procedures, and requirements of school. Questions 8 through 14 provided parental feedback on parent involvement factors that may heavily influence student achievement and high school graduation.

Before the final study, a pilot study of the surveys was conducted in a high school with a liaison and a school without a liaison. A Cronbach's Alpha test for reliability was conducted on survey results. The statistical test indicated that Survey A (High Schools with Liaisons produced an adequate Cronbach's alpha only without question 11 ($\alpha = .703$). The scale for Survey B (High Schools without Liaison) produced an acceptable Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = .925$). Since the pilot was limited in sample size, the

researcher chose to continue with the full study without revision of Survey A and retest for reliability upon conclusion of the full survey.

The final segment of the study was qualitative, consisting of a Parent Liaison Interview (Appendix C). The questions were designed to align with this study's research questions and provide more detailed information about parent liaison activities in each school. Question 1 of the interview asked for the parent liaison to describe their job responsibilities. Question 2 corresponded directly with research question 1 and asked the parent liaison to expound on the role in facilitating student's progress toward graduation. In Questions 3 and 4 the parent liaison is asked to explain their impact on student's academic achievement as measured by grade point average. These questions correlate with research questions 1 and 2. Question 5 of the Parent Liaison Interview solicited the liaison's opinion of their most important interaction with students. Finally Questions 6 and 7 were aligned with research question 2 and asked the liaison to describe the impact of their interactions with Latino parents.

Interviews were conducted with parent liaisons in 3 high schools. The interviews were recorded and transcribed to text. The data was analyzed for recurrent themes, and similarities in responses and perceptions. Parent liaison responses were reviewed to establish connections between parent liaison practice and parental responses on the surveys.

Data Collection Procedures

The quantitative data for the study regarding graduation rate was collected through the AYP portal database available in the state. The graduation rate for the Latino subgroup, as well as the subgroups of Latino males and females, for each high school

were calculated using the state of Georgia graduation rate calculation formula: “(# of students who graduate with a regular diploma) ÷ (# of 9th-12th grade dropouts from appropriate years + graduates + other completers)” (The Governor’s Office of Student Achievement, 2008). A Friedman’s analysis of variance was used to determine if there is a statistically significant difference between the graduation rate of Latino students attending schools with a parent liaison and Latino students attending a high school without a parent liaison. The SPSS 20.0 program was used to perform the statistical analysis.

Parent surveys were distributed to Latino parents of high school seniors, those reported as Hispanic in the school district’s student records, in seven schools during the spring of 2012, prior to graduation. These surveys were administered following the guidelines of the University of Southern Mississippi and the school district’s Instructional Review Boards (IRBs) so that no individuals were at risk of harm. Likewise, the IRB policies required that participation by all participants be voluntary and anonymous. All instruments received full approval through the IRB process prior to administration of surveys and interviews in the Spring of 2012 (Appendices D and E).

The quantitative data collected through the surveys was analyzed and transferred to qualitative data based on emerging themes and similarities. The qualitative data from the interviews has been summarized into recurring themes to add depth and meaning to the quantitative analysis of graduation rates and parent survey responses. A summary of all quantitative and qualitative data was used by the researcher to draw conclusions about the impact of the parent liaison on Latino students’ high school performance and parent

involvement. The researcher also used the results to make recommendations for future research and study.

Summary

Chapter III of the dissertation summarizes the quantitative and qualitative methods to be used in the research study, and describes the study participants, instrumentation, and data collection procedures. A detailed description of the surveys, interviews, and focus group questions is included in the chapter. The statistical analysis of the data is also delineated. Chapter IV of the dissertation will provide a detailed description of the quantitative and qualitative data that resulted from the study. Chapter V will consist of a summary of major findings and provide insight into implications for future research.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS/PRESENTATION/ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

Chapters I and II of this research study provided a rationale for the study and background information on important themes relevant to Latino achievement and parent involvement. Chapter III specified the research design and the statistical analyses to be used in the study. In this chapter, the statistical results from the analysis of the graduation rate, parent surveys, and liaison interview will be presented. In Chapter IV the statistical findings from the study will be presented.

Findings

To answer the first research question, does access to a parent liaison increase the graduation rate of Latino students in suburban schools, a Friedman Analysis of Variance by Ranks Test was performed on graduation rate statistics in five schools over a five year time period. The graduation rate for two years prior to the implementation of the liaison was compared to the graduation rate in the two years following the implementation of the Latino liaison in each school. Results from the statistical analysis indicated that there was not a statistically significant effect of the parent liaison on high school graduation rate, $\chi^2(4, N = 5) = 8.694, p = .069$. Table 2 presents the mean graduation rate for 5 high schools for 2 years prior to the implementation of the parent liaison, the year of implementation, and the two years following the implementation.

Table 2

Graduation Rate Before and After Liaison Implementation Friedman Analysis

	M	χ^2	p
Prior Yr 1	2.30		
Prior Yr 2	2.10		
Y Implementation	2.40		
Post Yr 1	3.80		
Post Yr 2	4.40	8.694	.069

Note. M = Mean of difference in graduation rate for 5 schools

Figure 1 demonstrates the variations in the graduation rate over the five-year period. Analysis of the trends in graduation rate revealed large fluctuations over the five-year period, with three of the five schools measuring positive gains in Latino graduation rate. Schools 1 and 2 have the largest Latino populations and demonstrated the greatest consistent gains after implementation of a parent liaison. Schools 4 and 5 actually experienced a decline in Latino graduation rate during the year of implementation. See Figure 1 on the following page.

In order to answer research question 2 and determine the effect of access to a parent liaison on parent involvement of Latino parents in suburban schools, two parent surveys were utilized. Survey A, Survey for Parents in Schools with a Liaison, and Survey B, Survey for Parents in Schools without a Liaison were distributed in February (Appendices A and B). Survey A was distributed to 389 parents and 31 surveys were returned. Survey B was distributed to 78 parents and 9 were returned.

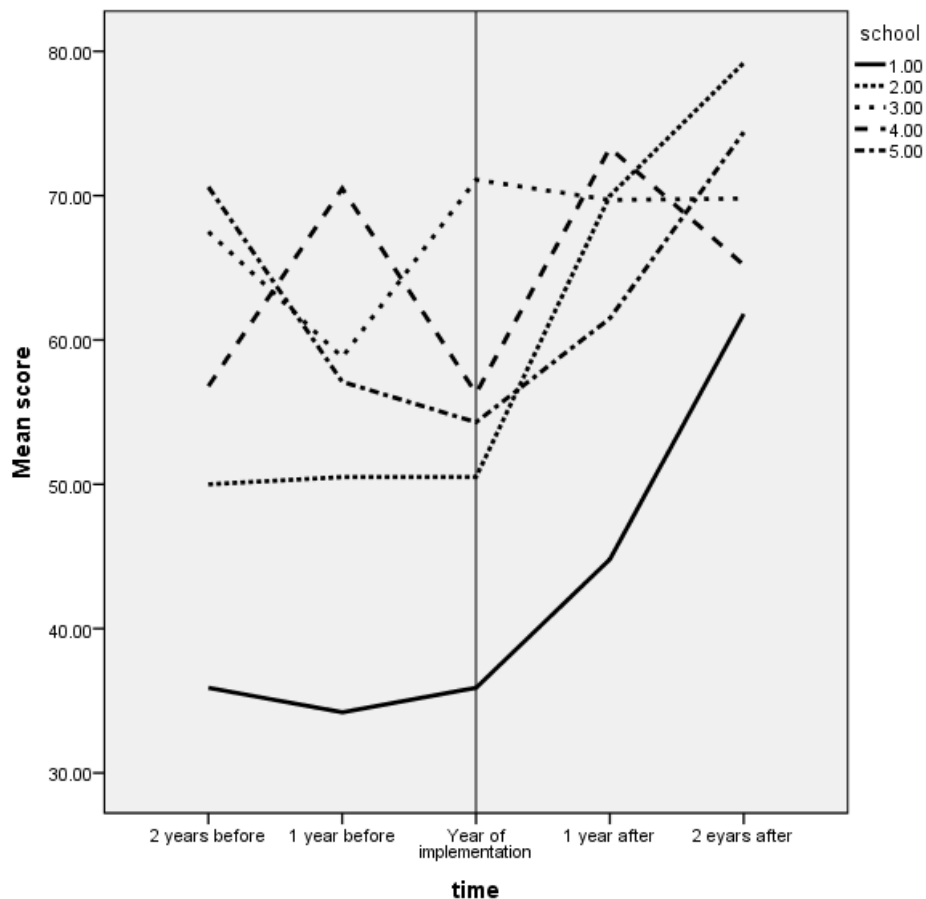


Figure 1. Graduation Rate Before and After Liaison Implementation. Each line depicts the change in the graduation rate for each school over a five-year period.

Descriptive statistics regarding the sample population revealed that the participants in schools with a liaison ($n = 31$) were predominately female (80.6%). The greatest number of respondents had students in School A (35.5%) or School B (22.6%). The parents participating indicated that the language most often spoken at home was Spanish (71.3), English (19.4%) or other (9.7%). Slightly more than half of the parents reported that they knew the parent liaison at their child's school (51.6%). The majority of the respondents reported that they visited the schools three to four times per year (41.9%) or one time per month (22.6%). A large percentage claimed they did not know

the liaison (45.2%) and never visited the school (29%). Almost all parents reported that their child's grades were mainly A's, B's, and C's (96.8%). Additional descriptive data is presented in Table 3 on the following page.

Latino parents ($n = 9$) with children attending a school without a liaison responded to Parent Survey B, Schools without Liaison (Appendix B). The majority of these parents was females (77.8) and spoke Spanish most often (55.6%). Most of their children (88.9%) maintained A and B grades. The parents reported that they did not visit the school often, either one to two times per year (55.6%) or never (22.2%). Although the majority of the parents indicated that they did not know that a Spanish speaking parent liaison was available in other schools (77.8%), most indicated that they would use the resource if available to communicate regarding their child's progress in school (55.6%). Additional descriptive data regarding the participants in schools without a liaison is presented in Table 4 on page 72.

An independent t-test was performed on the survey statistics using SPSS version 20.0. The independent t-test revealed no significant relationship between the access to a liaison and parent involvement as indicated by the survey questions. Descriptive statistics of the variables are presented in Table 5 on page 73.

Question 8 of the survey asked if access to the liaison increased parental visits to the school. The t Test revealed that Group 1 with Liaison ($M = 3.16$, $SD = 1.15$) did not differ from Group 2 without Liaison ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 1.39$) as predicted with equal variances assumed $t(38) = 1.344$, $p = .187$.

Table 3

Frequency Statistics Participant in Schools with a Liaison

		N	Percent
Gender	Male	6	19.4
	Female	25	80.6
School	School A	11	35.5
	School B	7	22.6
	School E	4	12.9
	School F	5	16.1
	School H	4	12.9
	Total	31	100.0
Language	Spanish	22	71.0
	English	6	19.4
	Other	3	9.7
	Total	31	100.0
Grades	A's & B's	16	51.6
	B's & C's	14	45.2
	D's & F's	0	0
	Do Not Know	1	3.2
	Total	31	100.0
Visits to School	1-2 times per Year	1	3.2
	3-4 times per Year	13	41.9
	1 timer per Month	7	22.6
	Every Week	1	3.2
	Never	9	29.0
	Total	31	100.0
Knows Liaison	Yes	16	51.6
	No	14	45.2
	Invalid Response	1	3.2
	Total	31	100.0

Table 3 (Continued).

Reason for Interaction	School Progress	9	29.0
	Teacher	1	3.2
	Communication College	3	9.7
	Information		
	Social Needs	3	9.7
	Nothing	10	32.3
	Invalid Response	5	16.1

Table 4

Frequency Statistics Participant in Schools without a Liaison

		N	Percent
Gender	Male	2	22.2
	Female	7	77.8
	Total	9	100.0
Language	Spanish	5	55.6
	English	4	44.4
	Other	0	0
Grades	Total	9	100.0
	A's & B's	8	88.9
	B's & C's	1	11.1
	D's & F's	0	0
	Do not Know	0	0
	Total	9	100.0
Visits to School	1-2 times per Year	5	55.6
	3-4 times per Year	1	11.1
	1 time per month	1	11.1
	Every Week	0	0
	Never	2	22.2
	Total	9	100.0

Table 4 (continued).

Knows that other Schools have Latino liaison	Yes	2	22.2
	No	7	77.8
	Total	9	100.0
Would Use Liaison to Communicate About:	School Progress	5	55.6
	Teacher Communication	1	11.1
	College Information	2	22.2
	Social Needs	0	0
	Nothing	1	11.1
	Total	9	100.0

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics, Comparison of Schools with and without Liaison, Survey Questions 8 through 14

	Liaison	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Total	.00	9	3.48	1.32	.49
	1.00	31	3.53	.98	.18
Increase Visits to School	.00	9	3.78	1.39	.46
	1.00	31	3.16	1.16	.21
Makes me Comfortable Visiting	.00	9	3.55	1.42	.47
	1.00	31	3.74	1.18	.21
Increase Involvement in School Activities	.00	9	3.44	1.42	.47
	1.00	31	3.48	.99	.18
Increase Communication with School	.00	9	3.44	1.51	.50
	1.00	31	3.61	1.12	.20
Liaison assists and encourages visits	.00	9	3.78	1.09	.36
	1.00	31	3.58	1.17	.21
Liaison is primary means of communication	.00	9	3.44	1.59	.53
	1.00	31	3.52	1.21	.22
Do not understand policies without Liaison	.00	9	2.89	1.62	.54
	1.00	31	3.61	1.09	.19

Note. ^a.00 = Schools without Liaison, 1.00 = Schools with Liaison

Item 9 queried whether access to the liaison made parents feel more comfortable visiting the school. The t test indicated that Group 1 with liaison ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 1.18$) did not differ from Group 2 without liaison ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 1.42$) as predicted with equal variances assumed $t(38) = -.398$, $p = .693$.

Question 10 of the surveys indicated whether access to the liaison increased parent involvement in school activities. The Independent t test revealed that Group 1 with Liaison ($M = 3.48$, $SD = 1.00$) did not differ from Group 2 without Liaison as predicted with equal variances assumed $t(38) = .094$, $p = .925$.

Question 11 measured if access to the liaison increased parent communication regarding academic progress. The t test demonstrated that Group 1 ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 1.12$) did not differ from Group 2 as predicted with equal variances assumed $t(38) = -.368$, $p = .715$.

Survey question 12 measured if access to the liaison assisted and encouraged parent involvement. The t test showed that Group 1 ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 1.18$) did not differ from Group 2 as predicted with equal variances assumed $t(38) = .449$, $p = .656$.

Question 13 assessed whether the parent liaison served or would serve as the primary means of communication with the school. The statistical analysis revealed that Group 1 ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 1.21$) did not differ from Group 2 ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 1.59$) as hypothesized with equal variances assumed $t(38) = -.146$, $p = .885$.

The final question 14 of the survey was designed to determine if access to the parent liaison enabled parents to understand policies and procedures of the school. The independent t test indicated that Group 1 ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 1.09$) did differ from Group 2 ($M = 2.89$, $SD = 1.62$) $t(38) = -1.264$, $p = .234$. See Table 6 on the following page for

further statistical information.

Three interviews were conducted with Latino parent liaisons. All of the liaisons interviewed were bilingual and had served in their position for at least two years. The three liaisons will be referred to as Rosa, Susana, and Berta. Interviews were recorded and transcribed to text. The responses of the liaisons were analyzed, themes were identified, and responses were coded to determine frequency of answers. The transcription of the interviews revealed several common themes: Accessibility of liaison, mentoring Latino students, college admissions and financial information, finding social, economic, and academic resources, teamwork with other school personnel, and communication with stakeholders. Detailed descriptive statistics are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Frequency Distribution Summary of Themes from Parent Liaison Interviews (N=3)

Question #	Theme	Frequency (Percent)
q1 Primary Responsibilities	Accessibility of Liaison	3 (100%)
	Teamwork with School Personnel	2 (66.7%)
	Communication with Stakeholders	2 (66.7%)
Q2 Impact on Progress to Graduation	Mentoring	2 (66.7%)
	College Admissions and Financial Information	2 (66.7%)
	Finding Resources	1 (33.3%)
Q3 Impact on GPA	Communication with Stakeholders	3 (100%)
	Mentoring	2 (66.7%)

Table 6 (continued).

Q4 Importance of Availability	Accessibility of Liaison	2 (67%)
	Communication with Stakeholders	1 (33.3%)
	Finding Resources	2 (66.7%)
Q5 Most important Interaction with Student	Mentoring	3 (100%)
Q6 Interactions with Latino Parents	Accessibility of Liaison	1 (33.3%)
	College Admissions and Financial Information	1 (33.3%)
	Communication with Stakeholders	2 (66.7%)
	Finding Resources	3 (100%)
Q7 Most Important Interaction with Parent	Accessibility of Liaison	1 (33.3%)
	College Admissions and Financial Information	1 (33.3%)
	Mentoring	1 (33.3%)

When questioned about the importance of the liaison's availability for the academic achievement of Latino students, the liaisons referred to their role as a mentor for students. All of the liaisons commented that they were involved in finding resources to meet the social, emotional, and economic needs of the students and families. "I try to be involved with every aspect of their lives. Sometimes it's not only academically; . . . you have to take of their needs, their home situation . . . before they can actually move on and learn and get their grades in check." (Rosa, personal communication, February 29,

2012). Another liaison explained the importance of the liaison's presence for student's general well-being as such

I recently had a graduating senior come to me and ask me if she can stay in my office for a second. She said "Ms. Susana, thank you for being here. Every time I come in your office, you make me feel like everything is possible and time just stands still." (Susana, personal communication, March 8, 2012)

The idea of providing a place of comfort and connection for Latino students was repeated often in the interviews.

As mentors, the liaisons expressed their belief that they made a difference in the future of their students. "If you can just impact them and change how they think and how they view themselves and see their future. I think it makes a huge difference in their lives" (Rosa, personal communication, February 29, 2012). The liaison's role in assisting students in the college application process was seen as having a direct impact on the students' futures and a primary function of the position.

The Latino parent liaisons placed equal importance on their responsibilities for interacting with the parents. "I feel my most important interaction with Latino parents at [name] High School is that once I've established a rapport . . . they feel comfortable calling, volunteering at [name of high school] . . . increasing parent participation" (Susana, personal communication, March 8, 2012). The liaison indicated that parents from other schools had contacted her for assistance because they did not feel welcome in their own schools.

Serving as a communication link to other available resources, such as school counselors, social workers, and community resources was important to overcome the

language barriers frequently experienced by Latino parents.

I give them a comfortable welcoming place where they can open up emotionally or if they are having issues economically, or if they are not understanding [sic] how they can help with college, I guide them, find resources for them through the social worker, counseling office and so on. My main job here is to work as a team with everyone [um] and find any resources [sic] that's available for the parents that may not speak the language. And also if Spanish is not their language, there's also people from the IWC [International Welcome Center] that can translate for those Asian parents or Portuguese parents so there's always resources to help those other students too. (Berta, personal communication, February 28, 2012)

All of the liaisons commented that parents often sought their advice on issues outside of school, from financial concerns and legal issues to marital problems.

In the interviews, each of the liaisons communicated multiple ways that their actions and interventions impacted students' process towards graduation. The liaisons pointed to conferences with counselors, parents, and college representatives as several of the methods they used to assist Latino students in their pursuit of a high school diploma. By providing community and school resources to assist with financial, emotional and social needs of the students and their families, the liaisons enabled students to focus their attention on their school work. In addition, by creating a warm and welcoming environment for Latino families, they encouraged engagement in school activities and parent participation.

Summary

The research study attempted to determine if access to a Latino parent liaison impacted the high school graduation rate of Latino students and Latino parent involvement. The results of the study were communicated in Chapter IV. An analysis of the graduation rate of Latino students in schools before and after implementation of the Spanish speaking liaison did not indicate a statistically significant impact on the graduation rate. A comparison of parent survey responses in schools with and without a parent liaison did not indicate a statistically significant difference in parents' responses regarding communication and involvement with the schools. The qualitative segment of the study, interviews with parent liaisons, revealed the importance of the role in establishing a welcoming atmosphere for students and parents, communicating about academics and college admissions, mentoring students, and serving as a liaison between resources for parents and students.

In Chapter V, the researcher will review the purpose of the study and the research questions, as well as summarize major findings. The findings will be related to the literature presented in Chapter II. Benefits of the research and its potential impact on educational practice will be discussed. Finally, recommendations will be made for future research.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The high number of Latino high school dropouts as compared to other ethnic and racial groups has been a source of frustration for parents, teachers, administrators, and political leaders. Previous research indicates that the numerous barriers faced by Latinos, including lack of knowledge of English, lack of human and cultural capital, lack of legal immigration status, and lack of parent involvement, contribute to their decision to drop out of high school and discontinue their education in the United States (Bourdieu, 1996; Fashola & Slavin, 2001; Garcia, 2001; Rong & Preissle, 2009). Epstein et al. (2002), Constantino (2006), and Mapp et al. (2008) identify family engagement as a vehicle for improving Latino achievement and successful completion of high school.

The parent liaison position has been implemented at multiple levels of education to assist with engaging Latino families in the school culture and to improve student achievement. This study was designed with the desire to provide empirical evidence of the impact of the parent liaison in suburban high schools. The research investigated the impact of the parent liaison on high school student graduation and parent involvement.

The research questions were

1. Does access to a parent liaison increase the graduation rate of Latino students in suburban schools?
2. Does access to a parent liaison increase the parental involvement of Latino parents in suburban schools?

The research study used a mixed method design, including both quantitative and qualitative elements. The first segment of the research compared graduation rate of Latino students in schools with a liaison for two years before implementation of the liaison program to the two years after implementation. The results from five schools that had employed a liaison for five consecutive years were analyzed through a Friedman's analysis of variance. The second part of the research study consisted of a comparison of results from surveys of Latino parents in schools with a liaison to results from a survey of Latino parents in schools without a liaison. The results were analyzed via Independent samples *t* tests. The final segment of the research included interviews of three parent liaisons to determine their perceptions of their impact on students' progress towards high school graduation and parent involvement.

Latino Graduation Rate

The first segment of the study measured the impact of access to a parent liaison for two years prior to implementation compared to the two years after implementation. Although no statistically significant difference was found, the trends in graduation rate in all schools with a liaison were generally positive, with only one school showing a substantial decrease in Latino graduation rate in the second year after implementation. As with many educational strategies and initiatives it is difficult to directly correlate implementation of the strategy with improvements in achievement. Many other factors such as fluctuations in enrollment numbers, socio-economic status of students, and changes in staff and leadership could have negatively impacted the graduation rate.

Parent Involvement

The second phase of the research attempted to answer the question whether access to a Latino parent liaison increased parent involvement. This portion of the research study consisted of a comparison of parent survey results from schools with a liaison to survey results from schools without a liaison. Although surveys were delivered in school to students and mailed to the residences and a student incentive was offered, less than 10% of the surveys were returned. The small sample sizes ($N = 31$, $N = 9$) contributed to statistically insignificant results; however several important benefits to liaison access are highlighted in the survey results.

The majority of the parents who responded to the survey reported that their students had above average grades of A's, B's and C's. In schools with a liaison, it was surprising to see that a large percentage of the parents did not know the liaison (45.2%) and visited the school three to four times per year (41.9%). A smaller percentage (29.0%) admitted that they never visited the school, even with access to a parent liaison. It appears that the role of the liaison may not be clear to Latino parents since many (32.3%) did not communicate with the liaison for any reason.

In contrast, in schools without a liaison, the majority of parents indicated that they visited the school less than one to two times per year (55.6%) or never (22.2%). Although most parents in schools without a liaison reported that their students made mostly A's and B's in school, they indicated that they would communicate with the liaison regarding school progress (55.6%), for teacher communication (11.1%) or college information (22.2%). Only one parent indicated that they would not use the communication services of the liaison. The vast majority were not aware that the liaison

position even existed in other schools. Given the opportunity to communicate with a school employee in their native language, one can assume that parent involvement would increase.

It is difficult to determine the quantitative impact of the parent liaison on parent involvement solely from the results of the parent survey. The feedback from the parent liaisons in the interviews underscores their role in making parents feel welcome and comfortable in the school environment. Liaison attempts to identify and connect parents with resources needed to solve social, emotional, economic, and academic problems serves to improve the family's social capital and allow parents more time to be involved in the education of their child. With liaison assistance, parents' ability to successfully navigate school culture and impact their child's academic performance is magnified.

Impact of Parent Liaison

The interviews with parent liaison revealed several themes of interaction that have a positive impact on student achievement and as a result, progress toward graduation. While the numerical evidence presented in the analysis of graduation rate cannot predict what the graduation rate might have been without the availability of the parent liaison, the liaisons attest to the positive influence their presence has on students. As Montero-Sieburth & Bart (2001) contend, Latino students have a critical need to connect with adults who understand the difficulties they face as a minority, immigrant population. The parent liaisons often become the welcoming face that offers a center of understanding and hope for Latino students and their families. The liaisons indicate that their objective "is not only to keep the parents informed, but also to be a place where a student may feel comfortable to ask questions" (Susana, personal communication, March 8, 2012). Not

only do the parent liaisons offer a safe haven for Latino students and families, frequently providing resources needed for basic survival, but they create a sense of belonging which in turn increases the likelihood that the students will stay in school and perform well (Blank, et al., 2003). The liaisons are often involved in coordinating field experiences, leadership, and community service opportunities for Latino students. These activities engage the often marginalized Latino student in the culture of the school and improving their self-esteem and self-worth.

Results from the parent surveys in schools with and without a liaison revealed that the majority of parents speak Spanish most often at home (71% in schools with a liaison, 55.6% in schools without a liaison). Communication between school and home is a critical component of academic success (Blank, et al. 2003; Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Constantino, 2003; Epstein et al, 2002; Jeynes, 2003; Lareau & Weininger, 2003; Mapp et al., 2008; Portes et al., 2008). Access to a Spanish speaking adult at the school empowers parents to communicate effectively and regularly regarding their student's progress. Parent liaison, Rosa, stated,

I think the parents are the one that have and upper hand on encouraging their kids and making sure they have a successful future . . . Because if we don't have parents backing us up on their education, we can tell the kids all we want to, that ultimately it will depend on whether the parents are being a support system for them (personal communication, February 29, 2012).

All of the liaisons emphasized the importance of parent communication as a critical job responsibility and a vital contributor to student achievement.

Maslow's (1970) theory of human need underscores the importance of fulfilling primary physiological needs of shelter and sustenance, as well as shelter, so that human beings can shift their focus to fulfilling the needs for self-esteem, belonging, and eventually self-actualization. Each of the liaisons interviewed emphasized their role in identifying resources for Latino families and connecting the families to the sources as a primary step. "You have to take care of their [um] needs . . . before they can actually move on and learn and get their grades in check" (A. Gutierrez, personal communication, February 29, 2012). By providing resources through school social workers, counselors, and outside community agencies, the liaisons build social capital within the family (Blank, et al., 2003). Research indicates that increased social capital in the family leads to lower high school dropout rates (Coleman, 1988).

While the statistical results from the analysis of the graduation rate differences and the surveys of Latino parents may not have given significant evidence that the liaisons impact graduation rate, the qualitative evidence from the liaison interviews reveals that their time is often dedicated to providing resources to increase student's social capital. Serving as a vehicle for communication, the liaisons work as a team with other school staff to increase student and parent focus on academic achievement. Emphasis on planning for the future after graduation, including discussing college options and financial aid, positively influences goal setting and student motivation. As revealed in Chapter II, a plethora of research supports the identified interview themes, Accessibility of Liaison, Mentoring Latino Students, College Admissions and Financial Information, Finding Social, Economic, and Academic Resources, Teamwork with other

school personnel, and Communication with all Stakeholders, as contributors to Latinos academic achievement and successful completion of high school.

The research literature supports parent involvement as a strong predictor of academic success (Blank et al., 2003; Constantino, 2006; Epstein, et al., 2002). Evidence from this research study, including parent responses to survey questions, and liaison responses to interview questions, corroborate that access to a Latino liaison can positively impact parent involvement and potentially effect academic achievement of Latino students. By providing liaisons in the schools to act as cultural and language brokers for Latino parents and students, educational leaders can begin to engage an often marginalized and underutilized parent population to support student achievement and promote high school graduation.

Limitations

A number of limitations affected the research study including sample size and design. The statistical analysis of the impact of the parent liaison on graduation rate was limited by the nature and scope of the research design. The small number of high schools included in the graduation rate study severely limited the likelihood of finding significant results. The decision to restrict the span of the graduation rate analysis to two years before and two years after the implementation of the liaison also reduced the significance of the results. The full impact of the liaison on Latino graduation rate cannot be captured without considering all four years of the high school experience. Most importantly, the study at the school level rather than the student level made it impossible to control for other factors that could impact graduation such as socio-economic level, language ability, and transiency.

The research was negatively impacted by the low return rate of parent surveys. A total of 40 surveys were returned, with only nine returned by parents in schools with a liaison. While a fair number of Parent Survey A were returned, the sample size of Parent Survey B ($n = 9$) negated the possibility of a substantial comparison of responses between parents with access to a liaison and parents without access to a liaison.

The absence of student and leadership voices in the study minimized the potential to generalize results to the larger student population and school body. As one of the chief benefactors of mentoring with liaisons, the opinions of the students will more fully demonstrate the impact of the liaison. Finally, the study lacked an instrument to measure the fidelity of implementation of the liaison's duties and responsibilities. It is difficult to effectively measure the impact of the liaison on graduation rate and Latino parent involvement without considering the specific actions taken by the liaison.

Recommendations for Future Research

As NCLB mandates approach the 2014 threshold for 100% achievement of Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO) among all sub-groups, schools are forced to more closely scrutinize academic achievement of races and ethnicities. Due to the rapid growth of the Latino population in certain areas of the country, school leaders have sought strategies to support Latino achievement. One such measure is the employment of a Spanish speaking parent liaison to facilitate parent involvement and academic success. This research study attempted to provide statistical evidence of the impact of the parent liaison on Latino graduation rate and parent involvement.

The inclusion of a greater number of schools employing a parent liaison would lead to a study with higher research value and likely more statistically significant results.

Expanding the study to other school districts with similar demographics and achievement results will add depth and validity. Likewise, increase the scope of the study to consider the full four years of child's high school career could add more meaning to the study. Delays at various stages in the study prevented this researcher from analyzing the graduation rate of the surveyed population. Future research should attempt to survey the same population of students whose graduation rate is analyzed in order to achieve a greater correlation among findings.

A comparison of graduation rate at the student level rather than the school level is likely to provide more statistically significant data. Future studies should be controlled for students that are identified as socio-economically disadvantaged (SED), those receiving special education services or students with disabilities (SWD), and English language learners (ELL). Likewise, at the student level, it is recommended that controls are included for transient students. Any of these factors are likely to have an adverse impact on graduation rate and negatively skew the study results.

Although the parent surveys provided beneficial statistical information, there were not enough respondents to create statistically significant results. Even though an incentive was offered to students, it is assumed that many surveys did not reach the parents. The researcher's attempt to bypass students and mail surveys directly to the parents yielded equally low results perhaps due to inaccurate addresses in the school database. As indicated in the research IRB, a potential risk of the research was that parents would fear that the survey was an attempt to identify immigration status, resulting in a low percentage return on surveys. This researcher recommends that future Latino

parent surveys be distributed in a parent meeting so that parents' can be personally assured of anonymity.

Inclusion of a student survey regarding interactions with the parent liaison and impact on academic achievement and graduation could provide further depth and connections in the research. Efforts should be made to correlate student responses to the actual achievement level of the student. Interviews of Latino students would also provide more insight into the impact of the liaison on their academic success and high school graduation.

The interviews of parent liaisons provided rich qualitative data to support their role in improving Latino student achievement and increasing parent involvement. A wider sample of responses would be beneficial to the statistical analysis of recurring themes. The collection of additional quantitative data related to the liaison's daily activities, including number of parent contacts, phone calls, visits, and meetings, as well as topics of discussion would allow for greater triangulation of data regarding the liaison's efforts and impact on graduation and parent involvement. Interviews of school leaders regarding their role in supporting the liaison and other strategies to facilitate minority achievement would also contribute to the research.

A recurring theme in the interview data was the importance of providing college admissions and financial aid information as a mechanism for motivating students' academic success. An investigation correlating the quality and quantity of college information sessions provided by the liaison and school counselors with post-secondary enrollment, could inform future efforts to promote college enrollment among Latino students.

Expanding the scope of all aspects of the survey will allow for greater statistical evidence to support the liaison role in fostering academic achievement. The wide variety of demographic and socio-economic qualities in each school makes it difficult to generalize these research findings to the larger population. Future studies should include controls for variances in population size and demographics.

Implications

This research study provides a wealth of information for educators who strive to impact minority achievement. Close scrutiny of the barriers to success at the school level will allow educational leaders to identify effective strategies for improving high school graduation rate and academic achievement of minorities. Efforts to increase social and cultural capital yield great benefits for all students and their parents. Leaders who understand that achievement is often heavily impacted by factors outside the classroom and create systems to mitigate those factors will positively impact student achievement.

No matter how small the Latino population in a school, it is clear from this research that most Latino parents and students would benefit from the opportunity to communicate in their native language. By ignoring this basic need, our schools fail to provide equal access to resources and an equal opportunity to succeed academically. It is imperative that school leaders across the United States create communication systems that accommodate the diverse language needs of their school population.

The parent liaison interviews provided powerful testimony regarding their contribution to individual student's general sense of well-being and comfort in the school. The liaison's role as a mentor to parents and students highlights the importance of relationships in fostering academic motivation and student success. Although the

quantitative evidence does not provide irrefutable evidence of the benefits provided by the parent liaison, the qualitative evidence provided by the liaisons underscores the importance of establishing mentorship roles in high school.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Educational leaders who are committed to providing equitable opportunities for all students and engaging parents in their schools should examine their systems for interacting with students from Latino backgrounds. This research study has demonstrated the powerful role that the parent liaison can play in motivating and engaging Latino high schools students in the educational process. The liaisons are able to act as cultural brokers and mentors for students who are frequently the most at-risk in our schools.

The literature review clearly indicates that personal and socio-economic factors have a tremendous impact on academic achievement of students. As responsible educators, school leaders must make every effort to mitigate these factors in their efforts to improve student performance. School counselors and teachers are overburdened with multiple responsibilities and often ill equipped to resolve issues outside the classroom and the walls of the school. The liaison is able to bridge the roles of educators and provide access to a litany of services to assist Latino students and their families.

Perhaps the most important role of the liaison is their ability to provide a means of communication for students and parents who are marginalized by their limited language ability and lack of understanding of the U.S. school systems. Students and parents who primarily speak Spanish outside the classroom are unlikely to fully understand the operations of our schools with our English only explanations. It is imperative that school leaders provide Latino parents with equal access to information and adequate knowledge

of available opportunities to support their child's education. Through this basic step of affording equity of access to information, educational leaders will increase the cultural capital of Latino students and parents and build bridges of trust and respect.

Conclusion

Even without NCLB mandates, a basic premise of the American education system has been to open the doors of opportunity for all students. As our schools continue to struggle with providing adequate support for minority students, it is important that the body of research about effective intervention strategies continues to expand. Ongoing efforts to improve instruction in the classroom must be accompanied by strategies that increase minority student and parent engagement in school culture. Educational leaders who embrace and support parent involvement initiatives such as the parent liaison program will begin to transform our schools into institutions that provide equal opportunities for adult success.

APPENDIX A

PARENT SURVEY A SCHOOLS WITH LIAISON

PLEASE RESPOND TO EACH NUMBERED ITEM IN THIS SECTION BY SELECTING THE INDICATOR FOLLOWING EACH ITEM THAT BEST DESCRIBES YOU

1. I am a. Male b. Female
2. My child attends _____ High School
3. The language we most often speak at home is a. Spanish b. English c. Other
4. My child's grades are mostly a. A's & B's b. B's & C's c. D-s & F's d. I don't know
5. I visit the school a. 1-2 times per yr b. 3-4 times per yr c. 1 time per month d. Every week e. Never
6. I know the parent liaison at my child's school a. Yes b. No
7. I interact with the parent liaison most often about
a. School progress b. Teacher communication c. College information d. Social Needs e. Nothing

PLEASE RESPOND TO THE FOLLOWING ITEMS USING THE RATING SCALE BELOW:

- | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------|----------------|-----------|--------------------|
| 1 = Strongly Disagree | 2 = Disagree | 3 = No opinion | 4 = Agree | 5 = Strongly Agree |
|-----------------------|--------------|----------------|-----------|--------------------|
8. The availability of the parent liaison has increased my visits to school
1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = No opinion 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree
 9. Access to the parent liaison makes me feel more comfortable visiting my child's school
1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = No opinion 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree
 10. Access to the parent liaison has increased my involvement in school activities such as Open House and Parent Meetings
1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = No opinion 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree
 11. Access to the parent liaison has increased my communication with the school regarding my child's academic progress
1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = No opinion 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree
 12. The parent liaison assists and encourages parent involvement in the school
1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = No opinion 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree
 13. The parent liaison is my primary means of communicating with teachers and other school staff
1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = No opinion 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree
 14. Without the assistance of the parent liaison, I would not understand the policies, procedures, and requirements of the school
1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = No opinion 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

APPENDIX B

PARENT SURVEY B SCHOOLS WITHOUT LIAISON

PLEASE RESPOND TO EACH NUMBERED ITEM IN THIS SECTION BY SELECTING THE INDICATOR FOLLOWING EACH ITEM THAT BEST DESCRIBES YOU

1. I am a. Male b. Female
2. My child attends _____ High School
3. The language we most often speak at home is a. Spanish b. English c. Other
4. My child's grades are mostly a. A's & B's b. B's & C's c. D-s & F's d. I don't know
5. I visit the school a. 1-2 times per yr b. 3-4 times per yr c. 1 time per month d. Every week e. Never
6. I am aware that other schools employ a Latino parent liaison a. Yes b. No
7. If there was a liaison at my school I would use this resource to communicate about
a. School progress b. Teacher communication c. College information d. Social Needs e. Nothing

PLEASE RESPOND TO THE FOLLOWING ITEMS USING THE RATING SCALE BELOW:

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = No opinion 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

8. The availability of the parent liaison would increase my visits to school
1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = No opinion 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree
9. Access to the parent liaison would make me feel more comfortable visiting my child's school
1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = No opinion 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree
10. Access to the parent liaison would increase my involvement in school activities such as Open House and Parent Meetings
1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = No opinion 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree
11. Access to the parent liaison would increase my communication with the school regarding my child's academic progress
1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = No opinion 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree
12. I believe that the parent liaison would assist and encourage parent involvement in the school
1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = No opinion 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree
13. If available, the parent liaison would be my primary means of communicating with teachers and other school staff
1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = No opinion 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree
14. Without the assistance of a Spanish speaking parent liaison, I do not fully understand the policies, procedures, and requirements of the school
1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = No opinion 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

APPENDIX C
PARENT LIAISON INTERVIEW
ENGLISH VERSION

1. What are your primary responsibilities at the high school?
2. How do you impact Latino's students' progress towards graduation?
3. How do you impact Latino's students' grade point average?
4. How important is your availability at the school for the academic achievement of Latino students?
5. What do you feel is your most important interaction with Latino students at the school?
6. Describe your interactions with Latino parents at the school.
7. What do you feel is your most important interaction with Latino parents at the school?

APPENDIX D

UNIVERSITY IRB APPROVAL

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

118 College Drive #5147 | Hattiesburg, MS
39406-0001 Phone: 601.266.6820 | Fax:
601.266.4377 | www.usm.edu/irb

NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

The risks to subjects are minimized.

The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.

The selection of subjects is equitable.

Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.

Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.

Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.

Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.

Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".

If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months.

Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: **11102406**

PROJECT TITLE: **The Effect of the Parent Liaison on
Latino High School Completion and
Parental Involvement**

PROJECT TYPE: **Dissertation**

RESEARCHER/S: **Jeanne Thompson Walker**

COLLEGE/DIVISION: **College of Education &
Psychology**

DEPARTMENT: **Educational Leadership &**

Counseling**FUNDING AGENCY: N/A****IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Expedited Review****Approval PERIOD OF PROJECT APPROVAL:
10/24/2011 to 10/23/2012****Lawrence A. Hosman,
Ph.D. Institutional
Review Board Chair**

APPENDIX E

SCHOOL DISTRICT IRB APPROVAL

Ms. Jeanne Walker
[REDACTED]

Dear Ms. Walker

[REDACTED]
Your research project titled, Effect of the Parent Liaison on Latino Student High School Completion and Parent Involvement, has been approved. Listed below are the schools where approval to conduct the research is complete. Please work with the school administrator to schedule administration of instruments or conduct interviews.

[REDACTED] High School
[REDACTED] High School
[REDACTED] High School
[REDACTED] High School
[REDACTED] High School
[REDACTED] High School

Should modifications or changes in research procedures become necessary during the research project, changes must be submitted in writing to the Academic Division prior to implementation. At the conclusion of your research project, you are expected to submit a copy of your results to this office. Results cannot reference the [REDACTED] County School District or any District schools or departments.

Research files are not considered complete until results are received. If you have any questions regarding the process, contact our office at [REDACTED].

Sincerely,

Chief Academic Officer

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